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City of Columbus Shuts Down Three Drug Houses in Three Days; Whitehall Police Assist on Two

Joint investigations by Columbus and Whitehall lead to board-up of Franklinton and North Linden properties—where police made close to 50 runs for cocaine, fentanyl, and heroin trafficking, gun violence, drug overdoses, armed robbery, prostitution

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that, in a first for his office, joint investigations by Whitehall and Columbus police helped secure emergency court orders to vacate and shutter two properties that were plaguing their neighborhoods with crime, drugs, and violence. The Columbus Division of Police and their Whitehall counterparts targeted both properties in separate undercover investigations after patrol officers responded to the premises for incidents ranging from multiple drug overdoses, shootings, and domestic violence to weapons violations, stolen vehicles, and armed robberies with a sawed-off shotgun, a revolver, and a machete.

The drug operation at one of the properties allegedly used a “doorman,” multiple cameras, and “scouts” to detect when police were approaching—and had access to semi-automatic weapons, body armor, and high-capacity magazine drums. The other used a “lookout” and “drug runners on bikes,” and had access to high-capacity assault rifles. A third property appeared to be operating as a brothel, and was the scene of at least five drug overdoses, including one fatality.

City Attorney Klein’s office filed separate motions for *ex parte* temporary restraining orders in the Franklin County Environmental Court to board up a duplex at [72-74 Stevens Avenue](#) in Franklinton, and [1667 Minnesota Avenue](#) and [1298 East Hudson Street](#) on the city’s northeast side. Officers from the Columbus Drug Enforcement Bureau’s Investigative Tactical (INTAC) Unit raided the three properties and enforced the court’s board-up orders. The City of Columbus has now shut down five drug houses this year, three of which have been on the city’s west side.

“These cases are the latest example of our partnership with the Columbus Division of Police, as well as other jurisdictions, to shut down dangerous drug operations afflicting our neighborhoods,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“We’ve worked with the DEA, Franklin and Delaware County sheriffs, Dublin police, and now Whitehall to continue fighting the drug epidemic that impacts all our communities.”**

[72-74 Stevens Avenue](#)

According to court documents, Columbus police have responded to this duplex at least 35 times

since 2017 on reports of drug dealing, violent robberies, multiple shootings, a suicide attempt, an accidental overdose attributed to the victim “taking every [drug] under the sun,” and alleged prostitution.

In the last two-and-a-half years, police officials have sent the property owner at least seven certified letters notifying him of the nuisance criminal activity occurring at the property and his legal responsibility to abate the issues.

After dozens of incidents at the premises, Columbus narcotics detectives from the INTAC Unit conducted three covert purchases of crack cocaine in April 2019. In May 2019, police responded to two reported shootings. In June 2019, officers responded to the premises after a caller said that his drug dealers had shot at him.

In August 2019, Whitehall narcotics detectives conducting an investigation were led to the premises of 72-74 Stevens Avenue and were told that a “doorman” and the individual “in charge of operations at this address...put sales on hold because they knew police were in the area watching.” They also were informed that there were multiple weapons, cameras, and “fighting pit bulls” at the premises.

Around the same time, police officers from the Columbus Safe Streets initiative were conducting surveillance of the premises and were told that the dealers “will send out scouts” and stop selling drugs “when they believe police are monitoring the area.”

On September 5, 2019, Columbus and Whitehall police executed a joint search warrant and seized two semi-automatic pistols, cash, crack cocaine in the living room, “white rocks” under the stairs, and 30 grams of an unidentified white powder in the kitchen. Detectives also located a key ring for a storage unit and obtained a search warrant to investigate. They found body armor and multiple firearm magazines and weapons drums.

On September 27, 2019, Columbus patrol officers found heavy narcotics and ammunition hidden in the floor vent of the premises.

On January 23, 2020, Whitehall police detectives executed another search warrant and found two pistols, body armor, crack cocaine in a toilet, suspected heroin and methamphetamine in a bedroom, cocaine on the living room floor, and suspected fentanyl and an assortment of pills in a living room box.

“This property is centrally located in one of the hot zones for opiate overdoses on the west side,” said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin, who is the Zone Initiative attorney assigned to the Franklinton and Hilltop neighborhoods of Columbus. “We greatly appreciate the court granting the emergency board-up order and want to thank Columbus and Whitehall police for their diligent work on this case.”

1667 Minnesota Avenue

Columbus police have been responding to this property, which is located near the Linden STEM Academy and Columbus Alternative High School, since at least 2018. Columbus and Whitehall police have conducted multiple covert purchases of illegal narcotics, obtained and executed four search warrants, and seized several semi-automatic weapons and over \$15,000 in cash, heroin, crack cocaine, and fentanyl from the premises.

On June 14, 2018, Columbus police were dispatched to the premises on report of a drug overdose. On July 23, 2018, Whitehall detectives, with assistance from Columbus officers,

executed a search warrant. They seized over 40 grams of fentanyl, two pistols, two rifles, and more than \$6000 in cash.

Columbus police and paramedics responded to reported drug overdoses and administered Narcan at the premises on August 31, 2018, May 29, August 12 and September 29, 2019.

After four covert purchases of crack cocaine and heroin in July 2019, Columbus narcotics detectives obtained and executed a search warrant, seizing two assault rifles, including an AR-15, miscellaneous ammunition, cocaine, fentanyl, and assorted pills.

On October 29, 2019, Columbus police received a report of shots fired at the premises.

Continued undercover surveillance indicated that illegal drug activity and alleged prostitution persisted at the premises. On January 15, 2020, Whitehall detectives executed another search warrant, recovering crack cocaine and fentanyl.

“It’s troubling to know that this property—with all the weapons, drugs, and violence associated with it—is located within walking distance of the Linden STEM Academy and the Columbus Alternative High School,” said Assistant City Attorney Sarah Pomeroy, who is the Zone Initiative attorney assigned to the Linden area of Columbus. “That’s why it was so important for us to secure an emergency court order shut this place down.”

1298 East Hudson Street

In the last two years, Columbus police have responded to the premises approximately 30 times for a range of calls, including five drug overdoses. Officers from the PACT Unit conducting surveillance of the property obtained substantial evidence that the two residents living there were charging both prostitutes and johns “rent” to use one of the rooms inside the premises.

Hearings for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief are scheduled for Friday, February 14, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for 1667 Minnesota Avenue, Tuesday, February 18, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for 72-74 Stevens Avenue, and February 18, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. for 1298 East Hudson Street.

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