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OUR ADDRESS

Street.....320 SW Upper Terrace Drive
Suite 200
Bend, OR 97702
Mailing.....P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

ADMINISTRATION

Publisher Heidi Wright.....541-383-0341
Editor Gerry O'Brien.....541-633-2166

DEPARTMENT HEADS

Advertising Brian Naplachowski.....541-383-0370
Circulation/Operations Jeremy Feldman.....541-617-7830
Finance.....541-383-0324
Human Resources.....541-383-0340

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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

BEND

Husband and wife arrested for smuggling fentanyl in peanut butter

BY JOE SIESS
The Bulletin

A Deschutes County sheriff's SWAT team used stun grenades to disorient and help arrest a Bend couple Friday morning for charges related to alleged fentanyl smuggling and passing counterfeit checks.

A search of the couple's home turned up large amounts of commercial-sized peanut butter containers used to smuggle large quantities of drugs, and several stolen checks from residents and businesses in the Bend area, said Sgt. Kent Vander Kamp of the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement Team.

Luke Anthony Martin, 38, and his wife, Ryeann Martin, 27, were arrested after detectives searched the couple's home in the 61000 block of Ferguson Court about 10:30 a.m., Vander Kamp said in a press release.

Multiple law enforcement agencies were involved in the long-term investigation of the Martins. The Martins are part of an ongoing drug case spread out throughout the state, Vander Kamp said.

"During a concurrent investigation, drug agents identified the husband and wife as fentanyl traffickers in the central Oregon area," Vander Kamp said. "The initial investigation alleges Mr. and Mrs. Martin have been importing large quantities of fentanyl pills and powder from the Portland area into central Oregon where they distribute it."



Central Oregon Drug Enforcement Team/Submitted photo

During a drug bust Friday in Bend, detectives located a significant, commercial quantity of fentanyl powder and fraudulent OxyCodone tablets made of fentanyl wrapped in plastic and concealed within peanut butter containers. This was likely done to mask odors and prevent drug detection dogs or detectives from finding the fentanyl.

Luke Martin's violent criminal history, which indicated he may have weapons, prompted drug enforcement detectives and the SWAT team from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Of-

fice to use "less-lethal explosive devices to temporarily disorient the Martins during their arrest," Vander Kamp said in the release.

No one was injured during

the arrest, but the Martins were taken to St. Charles Bend to be evaluated for unrelated medical conditions, the statement said. After leaving the hospital, both were transported to the Deschutes County jail.

At the time of his arrest, Luke Martin was holding a grocery bag with an unusual amount of commercial-sized peanut butter containers the couple allegedly used to conceal large amounts of fentanyl powder and fraudulent Oxydone pills wrapped in plastic, Vander Kamp said. The peanut butter was likely used to mask the odors to prevent dogs or detectives from finding the drugs, he said.

Detectives also found stolen mail from around the Bend area. Investigators believe it was part of a fake check operation they allege was being run out of the couple's home.

"Investigators allege the husband and wife are printing fake checks using real bank account information taken from unsuspecting people, businesses, and banks with information taken from the stolen mail," Vander Kamp said. "The counterfeit checks are often written in their own or conspirator's names, then cashed at the account holder's bank. As a result, the victim account holders often don't find the loss for many days and it's often not recoverable."

Both of the Martins are lodged at the county jail on charges of unlawful possession, manufacture, and attempted

distribution of fentanyl and methamphetamine, and first-degree forgery and aggravated identity theft.

Luke Martin is also facing a felon in possession of a restricted weapon charge.

Vander Kamp said the couple's bail has been enhanced because of the large quantity of illegal drugs they were trafficking, and that the investigation is ongoing with additional arrests expected.

Vander Kamp said in the last two years, the region has seen a significant increase in fentanyl trafficking. Most of the drugs are manufactured illegally in Asia and then trafficked into the United States by drug cartels in Mexico, he said. The cartels tend to mix the raw fentanyl with adulterants like acetaminophen — the primary ingredient in Tylenol — but due to the clandestine process of making the pills, the dosing is inconsistent, leading to overdoses and deaths.

In a clinical setting, a 200 pound adult would only need two micrograms of fentanyl, or about two grains of salt. However, it is not uncommon for the illegal pills out on the streets to contain deadly amounts of the drug, Vander Kamp said.

"Our main focus is to seek out the large scale drug operations," Vander Kamp said. "We are not seeking out small dealers. We are seeking out the source and following it to Mexico, following it to Asia."

■ jsieess@bendbulletin.com, 541-617-7820

LOCAL BRIEFING

Bend Police arrest OSP trooper for DUII

An Oregon State Police trooper was stopped Thursday night in Bend by police and cited for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

After driving through a blinking red light without stopping, Lewis Topinka, 40, of Bend was pulled over downtown by a Bend Police officer around 11:08 p.m., a press release from the police department said Friday evening.

The officer who pulled over Topinka soon confirmed he was employed as a trooper for the Oregon State Police. Topinka was issued a citation in lieu of being taken to jail for driving under the influence of intoxicants, which is consistent with current COVID-19 protocol at the Deschutes County Adult jail, the release added. Topinka was off duty and driving a pickup truck when he was stopped.

— Bulletin staff report

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