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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

February 20, 2009

Aircraft forfeiture sought following marijuana smuggling seizure at Tulsa airport ***ICE and Tulsa County Sheriff's 287(g) Task Force team up to make the arrest and seizure***

TULSA, Okla - Tulsa County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) filed with the county District Attorney's Office on Wednesday to request civil forfeiture of an aircraft seized last week during a joint marijuana smuggling arrest with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

ICE agents and TCSO's "287(g)" Task Force arrested Robert Parsons Bentley Jr. Feb. 13 on state felony charges of trafficking in marijuana. This arrest occurred after more than 28 pounds of the narcotic was discovered in a duffle bag in his aircraft after it landed at Tulsa International Airport. Bentley is from Big Pine Key, Fla.

The aircraft was observed flying in a suspicious manner, according to the Air and Marine Operations Center (AMOC), which is under U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). AMOC reported this information to ICE, which dispatched the Tulsa 287(g) Task Force to the Tulsa airport. Bentley had already left the airport for a Tulsa area hotel when the Task Force arrived. TCSO's K-9 unit also responded, and the dog alerted to the presence of a controlled substance in the aircraft. By 4 a.m. Feb. 13, the 287(g) Task Force secured a state search warrant for the aircraft and discovered the duffle bag filled with 28½ pounds of marijuana, which has a street value of about \$17,100. The Task Force later arrested Bentley in his hotel room.

"This was a great team effort from all three law enforcement agencies involved," said James Delia, resident agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Oklahoma City. "The expertise, resources and law enforcement authority of each agency made quick work of this investigation to secure a search warrant and arrest." Delia oversees the State of Oklahoma.

"Our Community is safer because of our relationship with ICE and the agents who are assigned to

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<http://www.ice.gov/pi/pr/0902/090220tulsa.htm>

Tulsa, as well as the utilization of the 287(g) Program," said Tulsa County Sheriff Stanley Glanz.

The seized aircraft targeted for civil forfeiture is a Cessna twin-engine 310 built in 1960. According to the Sheriff's Office, it's worth between \$20,000 and \$40,000 depending on the availability of its engine-service log books. Although it's not a relatively expensive aircraft, its forfeiture will prevent it from being used for future drug smuggling operations.

Bentley was released on \$25,000 bond late on Feb. 13. He is criminally charged with trafficking in narcotics, a state felony. His trial is date has not yet been determined.

TCSO established its 287(g) Task Force in August 2007. After a signed memorandum of understanding between TCSO and ICE, and a five-week training program, Task Force members are authorized to enforce immigration laws. However, as this case demonstrates, the cooperation between agencies extends to areas outside immigration issues.

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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