

James E. Cockrell
Commissioner

www.DPS.Alaska.Gov

STATE OF ALASKA



Department of
Public Safety

Anchorage, Alaska

PRESS RELEASE

Troopers Seize Rainbow Fentanyl, Arrest Lower 48 Dealers

Multi-Day Trooper-led Investigation Results in \$150,000 Fentanyl Seizure

November 10, 2022 (Fairbanks, AK) – On November 9, 2022, narcotics Investigators assigned with the Alaska State Trooper’s Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit (SDEU) seized over 4,100 counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl and 88 grams of heroin after concluding a multi-day investigation in the Fairbanks area. Additionally, Arizona residents 36-year-old Christopher Birdow, 37-year-old Daniel Barnes, and 29-year-old William Gurley were arrested for trafficking these illicit narcotics from the lower 48.

“Your Alaska State Troopers are committed to doing our part to stop the flow of dangerous illegal drugs into Alaska. This year alone we have seized millions of potentially fatal doses of fentanyl that was bound for Alaskans,” said **Lieutenant Tony Wegrzyn, Deputy Commander of the Alaska State Trooper’s Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit**. “This operation should serve as a warning to lower 48 drug dealers that plan on peddling drugs in Alaska that we take drug trafficking seriously. Know that the Alaska State Troopers will aggressively investigate drug trafficking and hold those that deal death accountable for their actions in our state.”

On November 3, 2022, Trooper investigators were tipped off that three narcotics traffickers from Arizona were selling fentanyl-laced pills in the Fairbanks area. Narcotics investigators from the Fairbanks Area Narcotics Team (FANT) began a coordinated investigation into the three traffickers. On November 9th, Trooper Investigators from FANT along with Troopers from the Fairbanks Criminal Suppression Unit, Patrol, and Special Emergency Reaction Team (SERT) executed a search warrant at a Fairbanks area hotel and seized approximately 1,090 blue “M30” counterfeit fentanyl pills, 3,090 rainbow “M30” counterfeit fentanyl pills, approximately 88 grams of heroin, and \$13,500.00 in cash. The estimated Fairbanks street value of these illicit narcotics is \$150,000.

Birdow, Barnes, and Gurley were arrested without incident and remanded to the Fairbanks Correctional Center on charges of Misconduct Involving a Controlled Substance II, Misconduct Involving a Weapon II & III, and Tampering with Physical Evidence.

“This investigation shows that drug traffickers will go to extremes to distribute their deadly illicit narcotics, in this case, all the way to Alaska from Arizona,” said **Jacob D. Galvan, Acting Special Agent in Charge, DEA Seattle Field Division**. “We are committed, along with our state and local partners, to relentlessly and aggressively pursue, arrest and hold these individuals accountable for the harm they bring to our communities.”

The Fairbanks Area Narcotics Team (FANT) is an Alaska HIDTA initiative made up of law enforcement officers from the Alaska State Troopers, North Pole Police Department, Fairbanks Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

If you have information about illegal drug trafficking occurring in Alaska, you can submit anonymous tips to the Alaska State Troopers using the AKTips smartphone app or online at <https://dps.alaska.gov/tips>.

###

Media Contact: Austin McDaniel, Alaska Department of Public Safety, (907) 269-5413,
austin.mcdaniel@alaska.gov