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City of Columbus Shutting Down Drug Operation's West Side Headquarters

Rotating group of Hilltop 'trap houses' were being managed out of Midland Avenue property located 400 feet from elementary school

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus secured an emergency court order to vacate and shutter a Hilltop property that served for years as the base of operations for a ruthless drug trafficking ring. According to court documents, the premises were used for the “commission, staging, and planning of felonious activity,” including supplying large amounts of heroin and cocaine to various drug houses located throughout the city’s west side.

City Attorney Klein’s office filed a request for an *ex parte* temporary restraining order in the Franklin County Environmental Court to board up [102 Midland Avenue](#), which is located near two elementary schools and the J. Ashburn Youth Center. In a surprise raid earlier today, the Columbus Division of Police’s Investigative/Tactical Unit enforced the judge’s order, evacuating the premises and confiscating any illicit contraband.

“This was a dangerous drug operation that was infesting the west side with crack cocaine, heroin, and other heavy narcotics,” said City Attorney Zach Klein. “We’re thankful and grateful that the brave members of the Columbus Division of Police were able to successfully and safely enforce the board-up order and shut this place down without incident today.”

According the city’s complaint, Columbus Police began investigating illegal activity associated with 102 Midland Avenue in 2017. Detectives conducting surveillance gathered evidence that the premises were being used as a “drug distribution center” and a hub to manage approximately five Hilltop area “trap houses” at any given time. The standard practice of the drug operation consisted of supplying each drug location with a “pack” of narcotics that included precisely 15 grams of crack cocaine and 15 grams of heroin. Once the pack was sold, another would be provided. Based on this system, authorities estimated that daily sales equaled up to \$7200 per day at these trap houses.

Known felons associated with the operation included individuals and gang members previously convicted on criminal charges ranging from attempted murder, aggravated burglary, and felonious assault to drug trafficking, illegally carrying a concealed weapon, and domestic violence.

Last month, on January 30th, officers responded to the premises after three shooting suspects barricaded themselves inside. The ensuing incident resulted in what authorities described as a

“large scale SWAT standoff” that eventually required police to use a BearCat to breach the residence. Less than a month later, the drug operation was back in business—police officials obtained evidence of crack cocaine and methamphetamine being sold out of the premises just last week, on February 18th and 19th.

The premises will now remain boarded up, pending a hearing for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief to be held at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, March 8, 2019. State law allows the judge to order the property to stay shut down for up to one year.

A copy of the court’s [TRO order](#) is available online.

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