



HIGHLANDS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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TAC Team arrests two wanted men, adds drug charges to both

SEBRING -- The Highlands County Sheriff's Office Tactical Anti-Crime (TAC) Unit arrested two wanted men on consecutive nights and both arrests led to additional drug charges and the seizure of 9.7 grams of methamphetamine as well as two handguns and a rifle.

On Wednesday, April 19, the TAC team located 26-year-old Juan Hurtado on Peugeot Street just before 7 p.m. Hurtado was wanted for violation of probation on a conviction for burglary and grand theft. As he was being approached by detectives, Hurtado reached into his waistband and pulled out a gun. He quickly tossed it behind him, and detectives learned it was a pellet gun that bears a striking resemblance to a Beretta 9 millimeter semi-automatic pistol.

After Hurtado was taken into custody at gunpoint, a search of his backpack turned up three glass smoking pipes, several clear plastic baggies and a digital scale. On the ground where Hurtado was lying, detectives found a bag with 3.1 grams of meth. Hurtado was charged with possession of methamphetamine with intent to sell and possession of drug equipment in addition to the probation violation.

On Thursday, April 20, TAC went looking for 36-year-old Justin Duane Sutton, who had active warrants for selling meth and marijuana. At 6:14 p.m., they spotted him riding in a car in Sebring and pulled the car over at Bowman Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard for a seat belt violation. While searching Sutton, detectives found a small Velcro pouch in his front pocket that contained 6.6 grams of meth and a small amount of marijuana.

A K-9 review of the car indicated there were drugs inside, so it was searched. Inside, detectives found a black bag on the passenger floorboard, where Sutton had been sitting. Inside the bag were two handguns, a digital scale, shotgun shells, several Carisoprodol pills (a muscle relaxant that is a Schedule IV narcotic). In the rear seat was a fully loaded .40-caliber rifle. There were also around 100 rounds of ammunition for the various firearms.

Sutton, who has 13 felony convictions, was charged with possession of a weapon by a convicted felon, possession of methamphetamine with intent to deliver/distribute, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, misdemeanor possession of marijuana and possession of drug equipment.

“These are two more proactive arrests by our TAC Team,” said Major Mike Brown, head of the Law Enforcement Bureau. “One of their primary functions is the interdiction of street-level drug sales. We know that most street-level dealers are indiscriminate about their products and buyers.

“For those who continue to sell this trash in our community, know we are one step behind you closing in. There will be zero tolerance.”

Note: All arrests do not lead to convictions. Everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.