

Friday, March 27, 2009

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Posted on: Sunday, January 8, 2006

## No decline in meth arrests

By **Peter Boylan**

Advertiser Staff Writer

Methamphetamine arrests in Honolulu last year will have met or even surpassed 2004 totals, which would continue a trend of increasing arrests since 2002.

Maj. Kevin Lima, head of the Honolulu Police Department's Narcotics/Vice Division, said officers are averaging 55 to 60 arrests a month on methamphetamine-related charges, including possession and distribution.

Through Nov. 30 last year, police had opened 897 methamphetamine investigations and made 666 arrests, compared with 883 investigations and 709 arrests in all of 2004.

Methamphetamine arrests have risen steadily in Honolulu every year since 2002. Comparable state and federal statistics for drug arrests were unavailable.

An ounce of the drug sells for \$1,800 to \$2,000, so methamphetamine or ice is often linked to other crimes. By arresting ice offenders, Lima said, officers often are taking burglars or thieves off the streets.

"It would be safe to say that a large percentage of crimes that occur in our communities is attributed to drug addiction. Many people who are arrested for shoplifting are also arrested for the possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia too," he said.

"In speaking with one of my senior drug investigators, he feels that about 75 percent of the shoplifting arrests involve drug addicts. It would be safe to say that the number is the same, or worse, for Honolulu burglars."

While methamphetamine arrests rose, fewer clandestine meth laboratories were raided — 13 last year, compared with 24 in 2004.

Most of the labs found here are "wash labs," where cooks purify methamphetamine that is usually smuggled into the Islands on commercial airlines or through the mail from Mexico, California or Asia.

Police and Honolulu Prosecutor Peter Carlisle said the increasing arrests are encouraging because violent crimes and property crimes, commonly associated with methamphetamine abuse, have been dropping steadily for the past three years.

"When there has been an increased number of arrests for methamphetamine use, a corresponding

reduction in violent offenses and property crime offenses occurs, and that's what we've been seeing for 2 1/2 years now," said Carlisle.

"It's very discouraging (that) we have such a big meth problem, but it appears the steps that are being taken are having a positive impact."

Arrest statistics are but one gauge of the size and scope of the crystal methamphetamine problem in Hawai'i. Another indicator is the number of people entering treatment for methamphetamine addiction, which has risen every year since 1998.

More than 3,600 adults and adolescents admitted themselves to fully funded treatment programs for methamphetamine abuse in 2005, up from 3,265 in 2004 and 3,163 in 2003, according to statistics released by the state Department of Health. By comparison, fewer than 1,700 people sought treatment for methamphetamine abuse seven years ago.

Alan Shinn, director of the Coalition for a Drug Free Hawai'i, said aggressive law enforcement efforts alone will be insufficient to curb the use of ice.

The rising arrest numbers are "not surprising," Shin said.

"It's pretty much the same since we had all the town hall meetings two years ago," he said. "It's (crystal methamphetamine) still very accessible, and we're not getting to the real roots of the problem, and we can debate what that is. It's a public-health issue and communities need to get involved, but it is hard to sustain that effort."

Carlisle said arresting people could force them into treatment, and could serve as the catalyst for a longer-term solution. He is among proponents of a get-tough approach who say reducing the prevalence of the drug depends on a balanced approach of treatment, law enforcement, education and community awareness.

"Sometimes coercion through the legal system forces somebody into treatment," said Carlisle. "Typically, meth users don't volunteer for treatment, so you need a hammer: an arrest, some entry into the criminal justice system that not only allows for incarceration but also for forced treatment."

Some officials say law enforcement is doing what it can, but that ice use cannot be reduced simply by arresting and incarcerating offenders. Efficient, cost-effective solutions are needed in a post-9/11 world in which law-enforcement resources are being heavily diverted to homeland security and counterintelligence.

"The FBI recognizes crystal methamphetamine as a major problem facing Hawai'i residents, and despite the reduction in drug enforcement resources, the FBI continues to work with local law enforcement, Hawai'i High Intensity DTA (Drug Trafficking Area), organized crime drug enforcement task force, and the U.S. Attorney's Office to combat this problem," said Charles Goodwin, special agent in charge of the Honolulu FBI office.

The FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration, county police departments and the state sheriffs are the primary investigators of methamphetamine offenses in the Islands. Most of their efforts are coordinated through the Hawai'i High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area network.

In Honolulu, the police department's narcotics vice division has two 20-member teams that deal with ice complaints from the community.

The division also has two other groups that are cross-deputized with federal law enforcement and work with the Drug Enforcement Administration and FBI as part of High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area network.

Honolulu police attack methamphetamine and other drug trafficking on several fronts.

The department conducts drug investigations both at the distribution (low) level as well as the trafficking (smuggling) level, Lima said. The department teams with federal agents and state sheriffs to stop drugs at the airport.

Law enforcement agencies increase their chances of success when they cooperate and pool resources, Lima and Goodwin said.

At the grassroots level, Honolulu police make presentations to the community when time permits, Lima said. The Drug Abuse Resistance Education program is promoted in elementary and high

schools.

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## METHAMPHETAMINE CRIME NUMBERS

Number of arrests



\*Through Nov. 30

Clandestine labs found



Source: Honolulu Police Department

The Honolulu Advertiser