

Drug Bust Nets ½ Pound Meth near Hoodoo

by Richard Burton

For the second time in ten days, the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) Team seized a substantial amount of methamphetamine that was hidden in a secret compartment of a suspected smuggler's vehicle, authorities said. The driver of the vehicle was arrested for allegedly attempting to bring in ½ pound of meth from Salem to Bend.

On Thursday, October 5, CODE developed reliable information that a shipment of meth was being prepared for transport from Salem to Bend via Highway 22/20, and that the Salem-based trafficker would be making a drop-off to a second conspirator in the area of the Hoodoo Ski Resort access road.

1/2 pound of methamphetamine allegedly found in a hidden compartment of suspect's vehicle, and Daniel Garcia Lopez. Photos provided by CODE Team and Deschutes County Jail. Detectives took Daniel Garcia Lopez, 25, of Salem into custody about 2:30 p.m. Friday when he arrived at the drop-off point and a thorough search of his GMC pickup revealed a hidden compartment under the storage box/arm rest separating the two front seats. To gain access to the compartment, it was necessary to remove the storage box/arm rest, pull back the floor carpet, and manually slide open a hidden door. It appeared that the box was welded in place from the underside of the vehicle, said Lt. Jim Porter.

According to Porter, CODE detectives found 1/2 pound of methamphetamine with a street value of over \$22,000 packaged in a vacuum heat-sealed bag. Further investigation and interviews determined the drugs were being transported for delivery to drug dealers in the Bend area.

The suspect was accompanied by his girlfriend/companion who is six-months pregnant, and his two sons, ages three and four, said the lieutenant. Detectives took them to a safe location to await the arrival of a family member providing transportation back to Salem, said Porter.

Garcia was charged with possession and delivery of methamphetamine, two counts of endangering a child, and possession of a forged instrument. He was lodged in the Deschutes County Jail in Bend, and the case has

been forwarded to a special cross-designated Deschutes County Deputy District Attorney assigned to the CODE team who will determine if the charges will be prosecuted in the State of Oregon court system, or in the U.S. Federal District court system.

Lt. Porter added, "This is the third vehicle specifically designed for the smuggling of controlled substances that the CODE team has seized in Central Oregon in the past 21 months. A combined total of over 10 pounds of methamphetamine was taken from the three vehicles."

Anyone with information on the location or operations of a vehicle that has been altered for the purpose of smuggling controlled substances is asked to contact the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement Team at: (541) 312-6414.

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