Traffic Stop leads to Drug Arrest, 4 1/2 pound Meth Seizure

by Richard Burton

A simple stop for a traffic violation Wednesday afternoon led to the arrest of a California man for multiple drug charges and the seizure of about 4.5 pounds of methamphetamine found in a hidden compartment behind the glove box of his car, authorities said.

Eliseo Sanchez-Covarrubias, DCJ Photo A Bend Police officer stopped a Mazda driven by Eliseo Sanchez-Covarrubias, a 28-year old Sacramento resident, shortly before 5 p.m. September 27 in the 1600 block of northeast 3rd Street, near northeast Quimby.

Sanchez- Covarrubias â€œdisplayed numerous indicators that are commonly associated with individuals who traffic in large quantities of controlled substancesâ€•, said Lt. Jim Porter, and detectives from the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) team were called in to assist the Bend police officer.

Officers and detectives received information from narcotics investigators in the Central Valley area of California that indicated Sanchez-Covarrubias had ties to narcotics sales and trafficking in that area. After receiving permission from the suspect to search the vehicle, detectives found recently welded metal panels under the glove box area.

(top) Abby, the narcotics-detcting K-9, and (bottom) Hidden compartment near glove box A narcotics-detecting K-9 dog named Abby and her partner, currently assigned to the Redmond-Deschutes County street crimes team, were called in to assist with the search. The dog displayed a positive alert for drugs in the same recently welded area under the glove box, and detectives found a uniquely designed hidden compartment.

The passenger-side airbag access panel was modified to act as a door for the secret compartment, with several heating and cooling control knobs and switches required to be set in a specific sequence to activate an electrical feed to the door of the hideaway, said Porter. Once the switch acquired a power source, a magnetized casino poker chip was used as a magnetic key to open the compartment.

When detectives opened the compartment, they allegedly found about 4 Â½ pounds of high quality methamphetamine -â€“ enough for 4,000 doses -â€“ with a street value of over $200,000.

According to Lt. Porter, Sanchez-Covarrubias was arrested and lodged in the Deschutes County Adult Corrections Facility and will likely face charges of possession, manufacturing, and delivery of methamphetamine, in addition to delivery of meth within 1,000 feet of a school.

Since January 1st of this year, CODE has seized over 16 pounds of methamphetamine with a street value of over $700,000 dollars, added Porter.

About CODE: The CODE team is a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force comprised of detectives from all Central Oregon law enforcement agencies including: Bend Police Department, Deschutes County Sheriffâ€™s Office, Redmond Police Department, Crook County Sheriffâ€™s Office, Prineville Police Department, Oregon State Police, Jefferson County Sheriffs Department, United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Deschutes County District Attorney and the Oregon National Guard.

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