

"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."

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Does the Cheyenne police chief have his own agenda when dealing with illegal drug activity in the City?

by *Dave Featherly*

The WT-E recently editorialized about a drastic measure taken by police chief Bob Fecht that weakened the effort to combat the serious and growing illegal drug invasion into Cheyenne.

As they always do, the WT-E took the side of the City of Cheyenne, without bothering to look into the issue or ascertain any of the facts. Their editorial policy has become, "If the mayor says it's the right thing to do, by God, it's the right thing to do."

Sources close to the story have told the Cheyenne Herald that either the police chief doesn't know what is going on or the WT-E did not understand his comments to them. One of the risks in planting stories is that the harvester sometimes is not up to the task - such as is the case quite often with this daily newspaper.

First, all three CPD officers were not "assigned" to the local DEA office. And all remained employees of the Cheyenne police department (CPD). They were supervised and were evaluated by superiors in the CPD and were paid by the City.

As an insider wrote in the Guest Column in the box at the right, drug interdiction, arrests of violators and convictions of those charged, are not an "us versus them" intramural fight. The local Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Criminal Investigation, Laramie County Sheriff's Department, Wyoming Highway Patrol and Cheyenne Police Department work hand in glove toward reducing and removing illegal drugs from our streets.

Bob Fecht simply does not understand, or does not buy into, the seriousness of the illegal drug problem in Cheyenne. That subject may not have been part of the curriculum for his mail order master's degree. In his mind, he would rather bust a user, one who buys small bags of pot occasionally, than bring down a network of suppliers who flood the local streets and schools with pot, meth, coke, heroin and other deadly substances. See P. 12.

A Guest Column

Exclusive to the Cheyenne Herald

Those who investigate drug crimes rarely engage the political arena that is law enforcement in the Cheyenne area. The agents and task force officers from surrounding areas have felt it unnecessary to get caught up in what is typically one person's agenda. Those responsible for investigating drug crimes would rather spend their time doing just that - investigating drug crimes. We do not care who gets the accolades for what makes the news. We care that the person arrested for distributing drugs in our community and state are prosecuted to the fullest. We do not care who gets the money for assets seized during an investigation. We do not let money or politics, or one person's agenda, dictate where an investigation goes. We simply target those engaged in the distribution of controlled substances in our communities. Period.

Normally the comments made by the Cheyenne Police Chief are disregarded with a shake and scratch of the head. In a recent article in the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle, the Cheyenne Chief stated, "the arrangement has led to problems in adequately pursuing local drug crimes." He continued by saying: "What's happened over the last six to nine months, everybody has started working nothing but DEA cases and we couldn't get local stuff worked." The Cheyenne Police Chief is simply wrong. I urge someone to take a look at Federal and local court documents and see just how many people have been arrested and the amount of drugs that have been taken off the streets of the City of Cheyenne in the recent past. Without any real effort, I can think of roughly 40 indictments resulting from two investigations. Of the indictments, 30 have pled guilty to distributing AT LEAST 500 grams each. Two were responsible for delivering (historically) approximately 16 pounds of methamphetamine and cocaine. Another pled guilty to delivering approximately 7 to 8 kilograms of cocaine. Investigations are continuing.

The Cheyenne Police Chief may have violated Federal Law US Code 18 § 2518, by simply disclosing information. Even the least experienced drug investigator knows that it is against the law to disclose information concerning a wire tap. I would be curious to know if the Cheyenne Police Chief had authorization to disclose that information. Not to mention the risk he may have put the informants or officers in by divulging information regarding an ongoing investigation. The Cheyenne Police Chief was also quoted as saying: "That's a lot of money for working a wire tap that isn't 100 percent local based." That comment alone tells me that the Cheyenne Police Chief is not interested in investigating drug crimes - he is interested in how much it **costs** to investigate drug crimes. Eventually, when investigating drug crimes you will find the investigation will continue into another jurisdiction. Therefore making it impossible to be "100 percent local based." That is completely unrealistic - not to mention unheard of.

Agents and task force officers assigned to investigate drug crimes have been responsible for disrupting the flow of controlled substances in the southeast region of Wyoming. It has been the philosophy of those investigating drug crimes that you cannot disrupt an entire organization by conducting low level street buys. Instead, those agents and officers better utilize their time by targeting an entire group responsible for the distribution of drugs. Anyone who keeps track of trends regarding controlled substances knows that drugs get to Wyoming from other places, and sometimes requires investigations to go across state lines to be further investigated or at a minimum passed on to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Furthermore, the three Cheyenne Police Department employees assigned to the local task force have been actively involved in every aspect of the investigations within the City of Cheyenne. What some law enforcement administrators fail to realize is that drug dealers don't always deal drugs between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. - at times requiring extensive hours of overtime. Not to mention, the Cheyenne Police Department is reimbursed for any overtime incurred by task force officers by state and federal monies.

The Cheyenne Police Chief is so far removed from what is actually happening in the area of drug investigations. The arrests and amount of drugs taken off the streets of Cheyenne in the last few years is staggering. The officers assigned to the task force have done a tremendous job - and have received numerous accolades and awards from other agencies that have recognized their efforts and the sacrifices they have made to arrest those responsible for trafficking drugs in our community. It is important to point out the lack of support for these officers from the Cheyenne Police Chief. He did not feel it was important to attend the presentation of a federal award to one of his task force officers. Nobody wants to tell the Cheyenne Police Chief how to run his department or who to reassign where - what we would like is for him to recognize his own officers have played a large part in investigating drug crimes and have been an incredible asset, right here in Cheyenne.

I would like to thank those officers for a job well done.

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Correction

In the December 27, 2007 issue of the Cheyenne Herald, Senator Tim Johnson of South Dakota was incorrectly identified as a Republican (R). He is a Democrat.

Marquee Sign at the Plaza

Why hasn't signage been placed at the plaza in front of the former UP railroad depot?

Even the Civic Center, with limited drive-by traffic, has a sign that tells passersby what events are scheduled for the future.

Wouldn't it be productive and informational to have a sign, readable from Central and Lincolnway, advising motorists and pedestrians what events may be scheduled on the plaza?

Knowing that the pancake breakfasts were to be held in that location certainly couldn't be harmful, could it? Or events during Cinco de Mayo? The live music paid for with your tax dollars on Friday nights during the summertime should be known to everyone passing the plaza.

How about telling visitors that the virtually hidden Visitors Center is now inside the depot? Or that the Chamber of Commerce can be found inside the same building? LEADS? Why keep their locations hidden from residents and visitors? Even to tell tourists that there is a picture

gallery inside the depot. Not the bar, though. That is a for-profit business and they can do their own advertising.

Those who are not aware could be told about the popular Farmer's Markets on Saturday throughout the summer - once Frontier Days is out of the way.

If there was nothing to promote going on in or around the depot, perhaps space could be sold for such events as "Girls Gone Wild" at the Outlaw Saloon. What could bring more pride to the area than having wet t-shirt contests and pursuit of the "Chest of the West" at the Outlaw?



Police chief's drug agenda?

The editorial: "And what might have sealed the return of the officers is that the city had to pay 40 hours in overtime because a local police officer at the DEA office was working on a federal wire tap."

Anyone working undercover on a drug (or other) investigation involving a federal court-approved wire tap, is prohibited from disclosing or discussing that information.

U.S. Code Title 18 Part I Chapter 119 § 2517. Authorization for disclosure and use of intercepted wire, oral, or electronic communications, Section 8, states:

Any official who receives information pursuant to this provision may use that information only as necessary in the conduct of that person's official duties subject to any limitations on the unauthorized disclosure of such information, and any State, local, or foreign official who receives information pursuant to this provision may use that information only consistent with such guidelines as the Attorney General and Director of Central Intelligence shall jointly issue.

The police chief is not authorized to discuss such a wire tap with a newspaper editor and common sense should tell him that even basic information that such a wire tap has been authorized or is (has been) taking place should be kept confidential. Neither the AG nor Director of the CIA have issued a directive relaxing that protection insofar as it involves a small town newspaper editor, I would bet.

I would challenge the police chief to name "the police officer at the DEA office" who was paid 40 hours of overtime.

Does the chief not know that overtime is paid by the other agency where such a CPD officer may be assigned? Either DCI or DEA. Was he playing cutesy with words when he represented that the "city

In his rant in defense of the indefensible, the WT-E editor wrote that, "Cheyenne police need to focus their attention on crimes within the city. They are being paid by the taxpayers, who expect to get their money's worth here." Who, pray tell, does he think pays narcotics agents working for DEA, DCI or any agency that tries to keep illegal drugs off Cheyenne's streets?

"The DEA tends to focus on federal and state drug crimes and not much on local issues," the editorial said.

Cheyenne is not in the nation or state? Cheyenne does not benefit when drugs are confiscated or prevented from entry into our city limits by actions taken outside our boundaries? What the hell is wrong with that kind of thinking? Are the editorialists at the diminishing paper so worried about access and "scoops," they will write any pap that is provided them?

While fully supportive of the police chief reducing efforts of DEA, DCI and its own CPD officers to reduce the introduction of illegal drug trafficking on our streets, the WT-E toady admitted that "drugs are a big problem in Cheyenne." No kidding. Tell that to the police chief, who seemingly still believes they are not. The editorialist admits, "the numbers [are not] locked down to determine how large the meth problem is, but a survey indicates it is here big-time -- and growing."

Yet, they support the police chief's impulsive and irrational behavior to diminish efforts to do what can be done, however little or however effective, to keep this crap away from our residents.

To take the ridiculous to the sublime, the editorial goes on to opine that the local meth problem "might be slowed somewhat with the recent startup of the Meth Resource Center, which serves all of Laramie County." Do they seriously believe the number of users (or family and friends) of meth will voluntarily traipse to such a facility in greater numbers than law enforcement can take off the streets with proper funding and support? Get real, you dopes!

What was not mentioned in the planted WT-E story was that Fecht also withdrew a police officer from the long-established DCI drug task force - a presence Cheyenne has had for years - and only relented and returned an officer when he found out that he could not serve on the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug-Trafficking Areas) board unless the City of Cheyenne had an officer participating with DCI on that task force. Being on a board of directors took precedent over "sending a message" it appears. Fecht neglected to mention that action to the duped WT-E editor.

Contrary to the position taken by the WT-E, the police chief has made it easier to sell, distribute and use illegal drugs in Cheyenne. New, inexperienced officers assigned to an internal narcotics unit will take a great deal of time to get up to speed - if they ever do before they move on. Morale is abysmally low at CPD now. Officers will continue to depart.

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had to pay 40 hours in overtime," knowing that the city was, or would be, reimbursed by the other agency for that overtime pay?

Would the local police chief be dishonest enough to play word games with a gullible WT-E? Or is he simply unaware that his department did not PAY such overtime - they only advanced it.