U.S. Attorney: Wheeling Island a 'Destination' For Drug Trafficking

26 Indicted on Drug Charges in Wheeling

By ALAN OLSON Staff Writer

WHEELING — The U.S. attorney's office in Wheeling announced 26 individuals have been indicted on various charges for drug activity that recently occurred on Wheeling Island, the majority of which were committed by Ohio residents.

U.S. Attorney Bill Powell spoke Monday afternoon at a news conference at Heritage Park overlooking the banks of Wheeling Island, where Powell said drug activity has been most focused, although it also occurred elsewhere in the city.

Powell said a 30-count indictment had been brought down on 26 individuals, mostly Ohio residents.

"It became apparent to our investigators that Wheeling Island and Wheeling Island specifically, had become a destination for Ohio-based drug trafficking organizations."

Of the 26 people indicted, 20 are from Ohio, mostly from Columbus and Cleveland, Powell said.

"These individuals used our communities as a sort of a drug transshipment point, and violated the safety of the communities. Drug trafficking often brings a lot of violence, which on the streets of the city, if we can get this issue under control, will go a long way in keeping our neighborhoods and our streets safe," Powell said.

Powell said residents deserve to feel safe in their own neighborhoods while trafficking was happening on the streets, such as Madison Elementary and South Side High School.

"No neighborhood or community, no matter what part of town, no matter the neighborhood, the community, will ever be the same as the first time it was all just a matter of time before," Powell said.

The indictment, which includes 26 counts of various drug-related offenses, was unsealed Monday, and the indictment charges various defendants with possession with intent to distribute, possession of drug paraphernalia, and conspiracy.

U.S. Attorney Bill Powell, Ramadan, and Drug Enforcement Administration, Wheeling Island Special Agent in Charge, said the investigation was the result of a joint effort by various federal and state agencies, including the Ohio Valley Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force.

Powell said the investigation began in early 2020, and the task force conducted numerous searches and recoveries of evidence, including drugs, cash, and property.

"This is a joint effort between federal and state agencies," Powell said. "We're very pleased with the results of this investigation and the work we did together to bring these individuals to justice."