

Centre Daily Times

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Third man charged in drug bust

By Sara Ganim



Palazzari

STATE COLLEGE — As police swarmed Greg’s Sunoco on University Drive Friday evening, there was no shortage of spectators.

Located along one of the main arteries into downtown State College on arguably one of the busiest days for traffic — moving day for returning Penn State students — parents with carloads of furniture slowed to rubberneck and rolled their windows down to ask some variation of: “What happened?” It was a drug bust.

The Centre County Drug Task Force assisted by the Attorney General’s Office arrested gas station owner Gregory Palazzari, 53, and charged two others — Mario Rincon, 27, who police say was Palazzari’s dealer, and Curtis Vonada, 23, Rincon’s housemate — with bringing \$50,000 each month in cocaine to the area.

Attorney General Tom Corbett said he believes they’ve had this operation running for years, though the investigation lasted two months.

Rincon, who fled in a truck toward Lamar when police arrived at his house with an arrest warrant, is still at large, with District Attorney Michael Madeira saying police across the state are looking for him.

Vonada, who was identified by authorities Saturday, was arrested at the Lemont home he shared with Rincon. He was charged late Friday night with drug-and conspiracy- related charges similar to the 50-some combined counts Palazzari and Rincon also face.

Madeira said Friday at the scene that the timing of the arrests had nothing to do with the students' return. Saturday, he said it would be only speculation for him to talk about whether Palazzari was dealing to students, due to the location of the business where he is accused of selling cocaine.

Police had been investigating Palazzari and Rincon since June, he said, when most students were out of town.

After shutting down Greg's Sunoco on Friday evening, police got search warrants for the station and Rincon's abandoned Elmwood Street home.

Madeira said they found a combined 20 ounces of cocaine, \$16,000, and other drugs and paraphernalia.

Friday, he called this a "significant" operation, and his office will be prosecuting the trio as the Attorney General's Office works on forfeitures.

The Sunoco appeared to be open again Saturday. Police tape that had surrounded it was gone, and cars were in the parking lot.

Palazzari was booked at the prison on \$50,000 bail. Vonada was sent to jail on \$10,000 bail.

Palazzari is also known in the area as the live-in boyfriend of Brenda Condon, the 28-year-old mother of two who disappeared in 1991 from her waitressing job at Carl's Bad Tavern, a Spring Township bar that no longer exists.

Condon's sister, Iris Myers, said when she heard about the arrest Friday, she wondered why it took police so long to catch Palazzari.

She's always believed that her sister's disappearance was linked somehow to drug dealing.

"I feel that she knew something that (someone) didn't want her to get out," Myers said."

Court documents with more details on these arrests should be available Monday.

Read more: http://www.centredaily.com/116/story/1465300.html?storylink=omni_popular