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OPIOID CRISIS

Nearly 20,000 heroin doses taken off Jacksonville streets, sheriff says

JSO: Operation Big Apple targets drugs trafficked from NYC

By Erik Avancier - Reporter

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - As the fight against the opioid crisis continues in Jacksonville, nearly 20,000 individual doses of heroin were seized and three suppliers were taken off the streets as part of Operation Big Apple, a yearslong narcotics investigation, Sheriff [Mike Williams](#) announced at a news conference Thursday afternoon.

The sheriff said the illegal drugs were being trafficked from New York City to Jacksonville.



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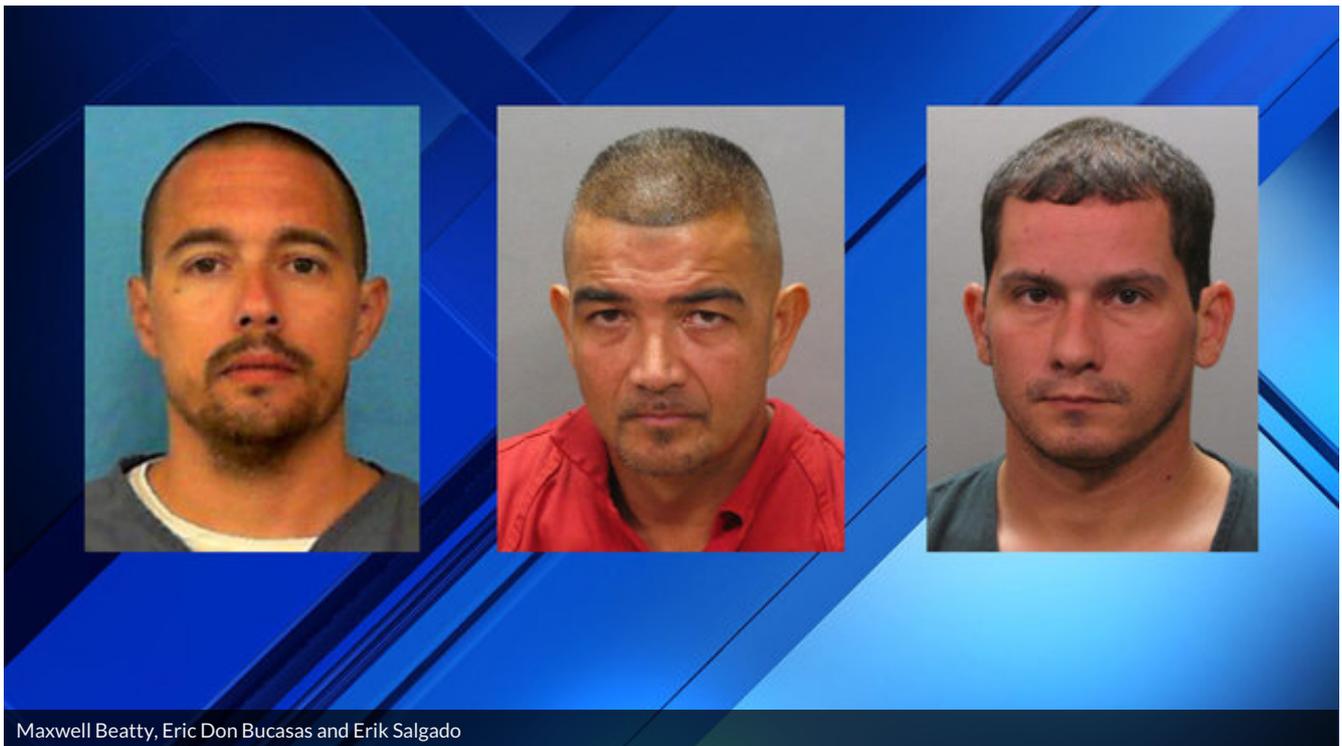
"If you are a street-level drug dealer, you have to know we do cases like this every single day and your day will come. Eventually, your day will come and you will meet our JSO narcotics detectives and you'll go to jail, potentially to prison, for a very long time," Williams said. "We're going to work very hard to make that happen every single day in our community. If you're a user, particularly of heroin, you need to get help."

On Nov. 24, 2015, Williams said, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office's Narcotics Unit served a search warrant as part of a street-level investigation and found 21.8 grams of heroin, which had been packaged for sale in small quantities, at the location.

Detectives said they arrested Maxwell Beatty and also recovered illegal steroids, methamphetamine, marijuana and \$5,081 in cash.

On June 22, 2016, Beatty was re-arrested after police said he was found with heroin and crystal meth.

Beatty was sentenced to 18 months in prison for a heroin conviction but only served eight months. He was released last week.



Maxwell Beatty, Eric Don Bucosas and Erik Salgado

In 2016, the Nassau County Sheriff's Office was investigating the sale of heroin and contacted the JSO.

Williams said his agency connected information with the 2015 investigation, and on Feb. 28, narcotics detectives served another search warrant at a rental home on Sharon Lake Drive on the city's Westside.

Eric Don Bucosas was arrested after detectives said they found more than \$4,000 worth of heroin, which was packaged in a manner similar to the way the heroin in the 2015 investigation was packaged.

"It makes you scared and nervous because someone could mistake his house for mine," neighbor Ladon Baker told News4Jax on Thursday.

Bucosas, 44, is charged with trafficking in heroin. In late July, he was booked into the Duval County jail, where he currently remains.

Williams said investigators learned the heroin was coming in from out of state, most likely from New York City, but was intended for the streets of Jacksonville.

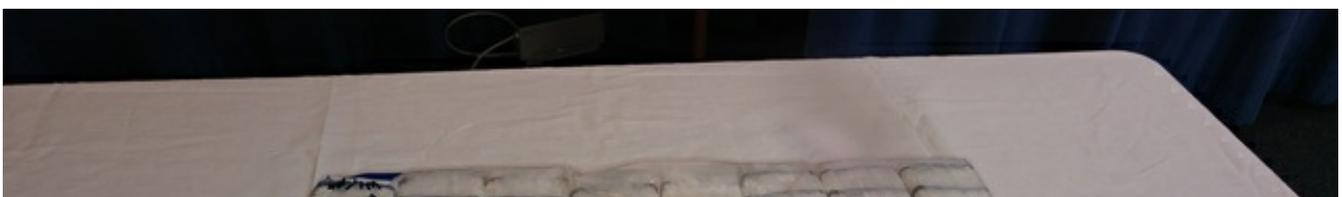
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Detectives then discovered a shipment of heroin was going to be delivered to Jacksonville, and a surveillance operation was set up at Edgewood Avenue and Interstate 95, Williams said.

During a Sept. 22 traffic stop, Williams said, detectives recovered a shipment of heroin, worth nearly \$400,000, which was packaged for sale in a manner similar to the heroin in the previous two cases.

Erik Salgado, 36, was arrested on a charge of trafficking in heroin. He's being held in the Duval County jail.





19,810 individual packets of heroin recovered by JSO

Although the three men didn't appear to work together under a single drug operation, they shared a similar connection, according to investigators.

"Mainly the supplier and the heroin they were selling," Williams said.

In total, the sheriff said, 19,810 individual packets of heroin, each representing a single dose, were seized.

"This seizure then, obviously, prevented those 19,810 doses of heroin from being available to users and addicts here in Jacksonville," he said.

Detectives said thousands of lives were potentially saved because they believe all the heroin seized during the three busts was mixed with fentanyl, which can be deadly.

"There's very little heroin we come across anymore that is not cut with fentanyl," Williams said. "So we expect a significant amount in this seizure. That's something a lab will work to confirm for us."

As the cases continue to be investigated, there's a good chance that federal law enforcement officers will get involved and there's also a chance more arrests will be made, according to Williams.

William's announcement was made the same day that President Donald Trump said he's going to war with the opioid crisis in America.

The sheriff said there were 464 overdose deaths in Jacksonville last year -- up 131 percent from 201 deaths in 2015.

In 2016, Williams said, there were 3,411 overdoses without death -- a 50 percent increase from 2,114 overdoses the previous year.

The sheriff said he expects those numbers to increase again this year.

If you or someone you know suffers from an opioid addiction, you can always contact places in Jacksonville, such as the [Jacksonville Metro Treatment Center](#), [Recovery Keys](#) or [Gateway Community Services](#).

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