

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Media Release

General Headquarters • Columbus, Ohio



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Patrol seizes 12 kilos of cocaine, valued at \$1.8 million, in Lucas County traffic stops

TOLEDO – Ohio State Highway Patrol troopers seized 12 kilos of cocaine, valued at \$1.8 million, during two connected traffic stops Thursday on the Ohio Turnpike in Lucas County. The three suspects will be arraigned today in Maumee Municipal Court on felony charges associated with the case.

The driver of a 2000 Ford Expedition, Ricardo Lopez Balli, 38, of Bradenton, Florida, and passenger, Roberto Cortez, 33, of San Benito, Texas, were charged with drug abuse and trafficking in drugs, both first-degree felonies. Lopez Balli was also cited for following too closely and driving without a license. The driver of a 2008 Chrysler 300M, Salvador DeLaCruz, 37, of Toledo, was charged with complicity to traffic drugs, a first-degree felony. DeLaCruz was also cited for following too closely.

Yesterday at approximately 3:30 p.m., a trooper stopped the Chrysler, with Michigan registration, for a following too closely violation eastbound near milepost 53 on the Ohio Turnpike. At about the same time, another trooper stopped the Ford, with Ohio registration, for a following too closely violation eastbound near milepost 58 on the Ohio Turnpike. Both traffic stops occurred in Lucas County. Criminal indicators were detected through both traffic stops and an investigation revealed that the driver of the Chrysler was the owner of the Ford. A Patrol drug-detecting canine alerted to both vehicles and a probable cause search revealed 12 kilos of cocaine located in the Ford.

The suspects were incarcerated in the Lucas County Jail. If convicted, Lopez Balli and Cortez could face up to 20 years in prison and up to a \$40,000 fine and DeLaCruz could face up to 10 years in prison and up to a \$20,000 fine.

Through February, the Patrol had seized more than 18,000 grams of illegal narcotics valued at approximately \$1.2 million. In 2007, the Patrol seized more than 3.3 million grams of illegal narcotics valued at approximately \$53.8 million.

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