



## DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE OF CHESTER COUNTY

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### Cigar Shop Busted for Dealing Synthetic Drugs

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced the execution of a search warrant at JM Cigars in Exton. The police recovered over 1,000 doses of alleged synthetic drugs at the cigar store. The Uwchlan Township Police Department spearheaded the search, assisted by the Chester County District Attorney's HIDTA Strike Force.

Synthetic drugs go by many names: bath salts, synthetic marijuana, spice, salvia, potpourri, and others. These so-called "designer drugs" are analogues of traditional illegal drugs, such as cocaine and PCP, often with only slight chemical alterations in an attempt to evade prosecution. These drugs can cause symptoms such as hallucinations, paranoia, seizures, and violent or aggressive behavior. Pennsylvania outlawed such synthetic drugs in 2011.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "Synthetic drugs are highly dangerous drugs that are being sold throughout Chester County. This class of drugs has caused serious medical problems for users, especially young people. Any individuals or businesses that are selling these drugs will be arrested and prosecuted."

The allegations of the search warrant are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

As a result of a burglary in June of 2011, the Uwchlan police discovered that synthetic drugs were being sold at JM Cigars. The burglars admitted that they were stealing "spice." The synthetic drugs were recovered and the police noted that the drugs were labeled "potpourri" and "not for human consumption." Uwchlan police informed the owner of JM Cigars, Jeffrey MacDonald, that such synthetic drugs would become illegal in August of 2011. MacDonald assured the police that he would comply with the law.

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<sup>1</sup> All parties are presumed innocent until proven guilty at trial.

Between August of 2011 and June of 2012, the Uwchlan Police Department had multiple contacts with individuals who were buying synthetic drugs from JM Cigars. These contacts ranged from car stops to another burglary. In each case, the police confirmed that synthetic drugs were still available and being purchased from JM Cigars.

A confidential informant also purchased synthetic drugs from JM Cigars under police supervision. When called by the police, an employee of JM Cigars confirmed the sales and even stated that he was aware that people were using the drugs to get high. Laboratory analysis of the drugs seized confirmed that they were synthetic/analogous drugs.

On June 15, the Uwchlan Police Department and the HIDTA Strike Force executed a search warrant at JM Cigars. The police seized over 1,000 doses of suspected synthetic drugs. The drugs were labeled with brand names such as California Kronic, Flame Boy, and Great White. The drugs also were labeled "potpourri" and "not for human consumption," consistent with the synthetic drugs previously seized in the investigation.

Uwchlan Police Chief Joseph Pontarelli stated, "This was an excellent joint effort by the Uwchlan Township Police Department and other agencies to stop the flow of these dangerous drugs into our community."

District Attorney Hogan added, "This search and seizure is intended to send a clear message. To every smoke shop, head shop, and convenience store selling these drugs, knock it off or we are coming after you. Chester County law enforcement will not let you put kids at risk."

The seized drugs now will be sent to a laboratory for analysis. Any potential criminal charges will await the laboratory results.

Anyone with any further information should call Uwchlan Detective-Sergeant Phil Owen at (610) 363-6947 or Chester County Detective Mike McGinnis at (610) 344-6866. Deputy District Attorney Steve Kelly has been assigned to prosecute this case.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan