



Madera County Narcotic Enforcement Team

2017-2018

**Madera County Grand Jury
Final Report 1718-05**

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Summary:

Madera County Narcotic Enforcement Team (MADNET) operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among multiple law enforcement agencies. The mission of MADNET is to significantly diminish the availability, production and use of illegal drugs in the county of Madera and apprehend the responsible offenders, thereby increasing public safety. Madera County Grand Jury (MCGJ) found that while MADNET is successful in fulfilling its mission, additional staffing, equipment and evidence storage would enhance its capabilities.

Background:

MCGJ elected to review MADNET because this task force had not been reviewed by MCGJ since its creation. MCGJ interviewed members of MADNET management. Field officers were not interviewed to protect their identities. MCGJ reviewed the MOU and other information provided by MADNET officials. MCGJ also conducted a site visit at the MADNET armory.

Discussion:

MADNET was founded in July of 1999. Prior to that, the Madera Narcotic Enforcement Team was known as "NET." NET ultimately grew into MADNET by joining forces with the California State Department of Justice (DOJ). MADNET is one of eleven DOJ task forces in California. MADNET is managed by a task force council via a MOU which includes the following agencies: Madera County Sheriff, DOJ, Madera Police Department, Chowchilla Police Department, California Highway Patrol (both Madera and Oakhurst), Madera District Attorney, and Madera Probation Department. MADNET follows DOJ policy and procedures. The current MOU designates the Madera County Sheriff as MADNET Chairman. The Commander of MADNET is an employee of DOJ.

MADNET's priorities are drug enforcement and dealing with the violent people associated with drugs. The primary violations and types of crimes encountered by MADNET include cocaine and methamphetamine production and illegal marijuana cultivation and processing. While MADNET's primary focus is narcotic violations, they also assist in other law enforcement activities.

MADNET's operation is financed by each participating agency. Currently the MOU authorizes eleven officer positions; only nine are filled. If additional personnel or equipment are required for an operation, those resources are paid for by the providing agencies. MADNET personnel are trained by DOJ. Required training includes 80 hours of Basic Narcotics School, instruction on

search warrants, impact of new laws, and ongoing hands-on training. They also may attend the annual California Narcotics Officers Association Conference.

Although there has been some legalization of marijuana cultivation and use, drug violations still occur. Proposition 64, recently enacted, limits the number of plants which can be grown indoors by an individual. Madera County does not allow outdoor cultivation of marijuana. Indoor cultivation for personal use requires a permit. It is illegal to sell marijuana in Madera County. According to MADNET interviewees, legal sales of marijuana, if allowed, would increase homelessness. Smoking marijuana in public places or while driving a motor vehicle is prohibited.

MADNET is the “stealth bulldog” of drug enforcement. MADNET receives notification of violations in several ways: confidential informants, other law enforcement officers and the public. Investigations begin with surveillance of individuals and properties. MADNET lacks a fully equipped surveillance vehicle with information-gathering equipment. It also does not have a single vehicular delivery system for transporting law enforcement personnel. In addition, MADNET’s current undercover vehicles are often recognized by lawbreakers.

Once law enforcement action has occurred, arrests may be made and evidence collected. Drugs, drug paraphernalia, money, weapons, vehicles and houses may be confiscated and held as evidence. Additional marijuana cultivation materials such as drip irrigation and lights are not always confiscated due to lack of adequate storage. All seized monies are deposited into a special account with the Madera County Auditor’s office. Procedures are in place for an independent audit of funds when money is confiscated.

After all legal proceedings are complete, the confiscated money is distributed among the participating agencies, and the drugs and weapons are destroyed under direction of the District Attorney with the approval of a judge.

Findings:

- F1. MADNET and its participating agencies have been successful in fulfilling its mission.
- F2. MADNET could increase its effectiveness if fully staffed per the MOU.
- F3. The distribution of confiscated money benefits the participating agencies by partially offsetting costs.
- F4. MADNET needs a fully equipped surveillance vehicle.
- F5. MADNET needs a single vehicular delivery system which can hold multiple individuals for enforcement activities.
- F6. MADNET officers’ safety is compromised because undercover vehicles are identified by lawbreakers.
- F7. MADNET has insufficient storage space for evidence.

Recommendations:

The Madera County Grand Jury recommends that:

- R1. MADNET continue the successful operations with participating agencies.
- R2. The MADNET council increase authorized staffing to minimize the borrowing of personnel, effective the next MOU.
- R3. MADNET acquire a fully equipped surveillance vehicle within the next year.
- R4. MADNET acquire a single vehicular delivery system to hold multiple team members within the next year.
- R5. MADNET acquire additional storage for evidence within the next year.

Required Responses:

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933, the Grand Jury specifically requests responses as follows:

Madera County Sheriff
2725 Falcon Drive
Madera, CA 93637

Madera County Board of Supervisors
200 W 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637

MADNET Task Force Commander
2725 Falcon Drive
Madera, CA 93637

Chowchilla City Council
130 S. Second Street
Chowchilla, CA 93610

Madera City Council
205 W. 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637

Invited Responses:

Chowchilla Police Chief
122 Trinity Avenue
Chowchilla, CA 93610

Madera Police Chief
330 S. C Street
Madera, CA 93638

Madera County District Attorney
209 W. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

Madera County Chief Probation Officer
209 W. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637