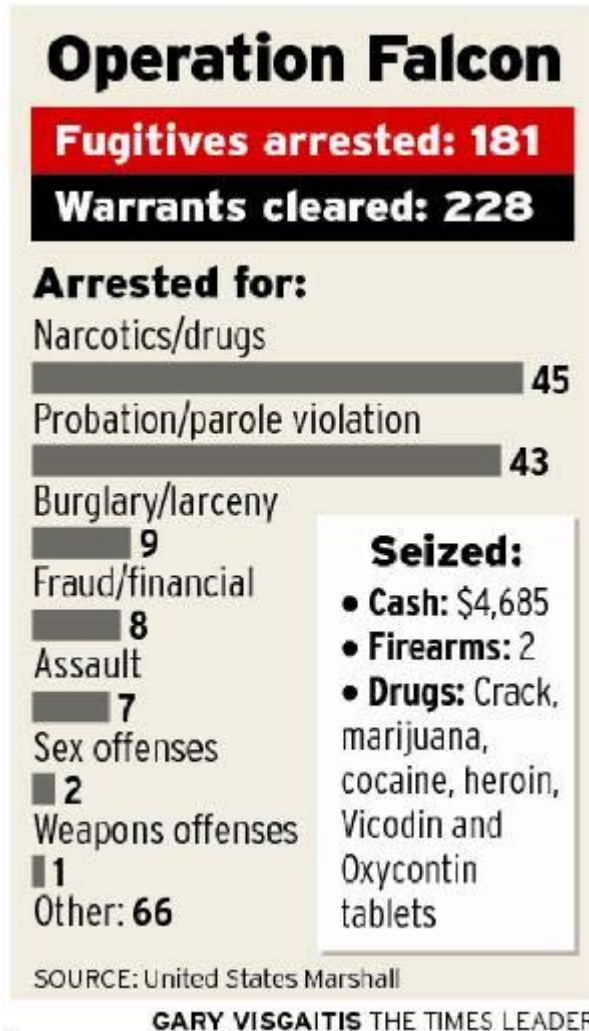


Operation FALCON

Among those nabbed were a Scranton woman found inside box spring, 16 wanted felons in Luzerne County

Effort nets 181 fugitives

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SCRANTON – Joanne Francis tucked herself away in a box spring under her mattress.

But, the fugitive, who was wanted on a forgery warrant from Scranton, could not hide forever in the cut-out box spring when officers showed up at her Blair Avenue home on June 8, said Donald Heemer, chief deputy U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

“So he (a deputy) lifted up the mattress and there was Joann Francis inside the box spring,” said Heemer during a Thursday press conference in the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building in Scranton.

Francis’ arrest came on the first day of Operation FALCON (Operation Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally), a multijurisdictional sting that resulted in the arrest of 181 fugitives throughout northeast and central Pennsylvania June 8-14 for sex crimes, narcotics, probation and parole violations, officials said.

A stolen firearm was recovered and drugs and \$4,685 cash were seized in the latest round of arrests in the seven-day nationwide fugitive apprehension effort coordinated by the U.S. Marshals, said U.S. Attorney Martin C. Carlson for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Law enforcement officers from 31 departments in 33 counties participated in the effort. Carlson said this was the largest initiative in the middle district region. In the seven-day operation, he said, deputy marshals cleared 228 warrants.

Law-enforcement officers made the most arrests in history – a rate of 53 arrests per day.

“The true heroes of this operation were the 128 officers who braved the heat, the long hours ... and stepped up to the plate and made all these arrests,” U.S. Marshal Michael R. Regan said.

The operation resulted in the arrest of 16 wanted felons in Luzerne County, including a notable arrest of a fugitive from Wilkes-Barre three days into the operation.

On June 10, deputy marshals, along with task force personnel, arrested 28-year-old Michael Pucillo, who was wanted by state police, the county sheriff and Wilkes-Barre police on nine counts of failure to appear for charges such as indecent assault, corruption of minors and bail violation.

Pucillo was found in Wilkes-Barre, where he was arrested and taken to the county jail, said Luzerne County Sheriff Michael A. Savokinas.

Savokinas said he does not think any one case is unique, but that the operation sends a clear message: “If you have a warrant, if you’re wanted, there are agencies that are going to come out looking for you.”