

I-20 traffic stops lead to drug arrests

By Kathryn Culver
Editor

Troopers from the Texas Department of Public Safety seized 28 pounds of marijuana Monday afternoon in two separate traffic stops that occurred within an hour of one another near Van Monday afternoon.

Trooper Richard Rieger made the first stop at 12:20 p.m. on Interstate 20, pulling over a vehicle for speeding.

Rieger said he became suspicious when the driver and two passengers gave conflicting stories and acted nervously.

He obtained verbal consent to search the vehicle and found a locked duffel bag in the trunk.

Rieger requested the assistance of the Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office's canine unit.

The county's drug dog alerted on the bag, which contained 18 pounds of marijuana.

Rieger arrested Russell Vincent Brooks, 24, William Ty Smith, 24, and Teaca Nicole Bacote, 23, all of Atlanta,

Georgia.

The trio is charged with possession of marijuana over five pounds and under 50 pounds.

All remain in the Van Zandt County Jail, held on \$40,000 bonds.

At 1:08 p.m. Monday, Trooper Bruce Dalme pulled over a four-door Chrysler for following another car too closely on Interstate 20 near Van.

After receiving conflicting stories from the driver and passenger, Dalme asked permission to search the vehicle and received it.

The trooper found 10 pounds of marijuana hidden underneath a spare tire in the car's trunk.

He arrested Rolando Hernandez, 22, Lewisville, for possession of marijuana over five pounds and under 50.

Hernandez made bail on a \$25,000 bond and was released from the jail Tuesday.

Canine Officer Jackie Buccafurno, from the Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office and drug dog Canuck assisted in the search at both traffic stops.

Rieger's bust Monday is one of several he has made since joining DPS-Canton two months ago.

Earlier this month, Rieger seized seven pounds of crack in a traffic stop on Interstate 20, where the suspect fled the scene of foot.

Trooper Jim Rohrman said Rieger found the drug hidden in the rear quarter panels of a gray Cadillac driven by Reggie Duane McLemore.

Rohrman said McLemore ran from the scene and crossed an I-20 entrance ramp, where he was struck by a car, but not injured.

The suspect tried to get the driver to give him a ride, but the driver refused.

Troopers have been unable to locate McLemore since the incident. He is wanted for evading arrest and possession of a controlled substance over 400 grams, which is a first degree felony.

Rieger and Rohrman also arrested two men, stopped in a stolen car, a week later for possession of 250 grams of



DPS Trooper Richard Rieger, Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office Canine Officer Jackie Buccafurno, drug dog Canuck and Trooper Bruce Dalme pose with 28 pounds of marijuana seized in separate traffic stops on Interstate 20, Monday. (Photo by Kathryn Culver)

crack.

Rieger arrested Shawn Michael Wilson for unauthorized use of a motor vehicle and possession of controlled

substance.

Brondrick Mack was arrested for possession of a controlled substance.

Don't Do Drugs!