



ASHE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff B. Phil Howell



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For Immediate Release
February 11th, 2026

Operation Crystal Ball

Total Seizures from the Largest Case in Ashe County History

Ashe County, NC – Sheriff B. Phil Howell announced today that the total amount of seized narcotics has been reported from Operation Crystal Ball, the most significant drug trafficking investigation in Ashe County's history. This active, joint investigation between the Ashe County Sheriff's Office and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation began in January 2025. To date, over 80 individuals have been arrested, disrupting multiple drug trafficking networks operating within Ashe County, North Carolina, and the surrounding region. As leads continue to develop, additional charges and arrests are anticipated in the next few months for Wave 3.

The targeted enforcement efforts of this operation through surveillance, executing search warrants, and multi-jurisdictional cooperation resulted in the removal of large quantities of illegal narcotics from our community. This operation and the resulting seizure of illegal drugs, guns, and money are a major step forward in improving public health and safety in this community. The results below reflect both the scale of the criminal activity and the dedication of the detectives involved. The Ashe County Sheriff's Office remains committed to working with local, state, and federal partners to identify, investigate, and dismantle drug trafficking organizations attempting to operate in our area.

Illicit Drugs:

- **Methamphetamine: 14.1 Kilos (14,129.5 grams)**
- **THC Cartridges, Wax, and Candies: 2.5 Kilos (2,562.4 grams)**
- **Marijuana: 1.5 Kilos (1,516.6 grams)**
- **Psilocybin (Found in Mushrooms): 1.0 Kilos (1,053.8 grams)**
- **Cocaine/Crack: 119 grams**
- **LSD: (Acid, Hallucinogenic Drug) 1,034 Dosage Units**
- **Schedule IV Pills: 291 Dosage Units**

Other Items:

- **U.S. Currency: \$30,659**
- **Firearms: 40**
- **Explosive Devices: 2**

**Total Street Value
of Drugs Seized
\$1,054,862**

“As Sheriff, I enthusiastically commend all personnel and agencies for their dedication and teamwork in completing this operation. Their countless hours of collaboration on this operation exemplify a tenacious commitment to keeping our community safe.” – Sheriff Howell

Sheriff Howell would like to thank all the agencies that have contributed: North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NCSBI), North Wilkesboro Police Department, Wilkes County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Division, United States Postal Inspectors Service, Alamance County Sheriff's Office (ANET), Davidson Sheriff's Office, Lexington Police Department, Kannapolis Police Department, Wake County Sheriff's Office, Greensboro Police Department (VCAT), Alleghany County Sheriff's Office, Watauga County Sheriff's Office, Boone Police Department, Wilkesboro Police Department, West Jefferson Police Department, South Bend Police Department (Indiana), St. Joseph's County Sheriff's Office (Indiana), Wisconsin State Patrol – Northwest Region Spooner Post, Jackson County Sheriff's Office (Wisconsin), Johnson County, Tennessee Sheriff's Office, Surry County Sheriff's Office, NC 34th Prosecutorial District Attorneys Office, Alexander County Sheriff's Office, Georgia Dept. of Corrections and the Georgia State Bureau of Investigation.

