



Sunny and nice today **C10**

SUNDAY



Sunshine and hot bargains!

Check out the great deals inside this edition

PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

\$1.25 Sunday

Port Angeles-Sequim-West End

September 14, 2008

5-day copter patrols net 20 pot plants

aircraft used
cross Peninsula

BY TOM CALLIS
PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

Between 18 and 20 marijuana plants were confiscated from a field east of Joyce by the Olympic Peninsula Narcotics Enforcement Team as part of a five-day operation that

ended Friday.

Trained investigators, using only binoculars, spotted the plants from the air, said Ron Cameron, Clallam County chief criminal deputy and commander of OPNET.

The operation, which began Monday, was conducted in rural areas throughout Clallam County and parts of East Jefferson County via two helicopters, Cameron said.

The helicopters were flying as low as 750 feet above the ground while

doing the searches, he added.

Since the operation was the first of its kind on the North Olympic Peninsula in four years, he had expected to find more marijuana plants in the woods.

"I don't want to say it's disappointing," he said.

"Maybe it's a good thing we didn't find more.

"There may be less people growing it."

Cameron said the investigators

flew about eight hours a day, and focused primarily on the West End of Clallam County because it is more remote than other parts of the Peninsula.

Fog during the week delayed some of the flights, Cameron said, which left the investigators without enough time to fly over West Jefferson County.

The helicopters were contracted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency at no cost to local agencies, he said.

OPNET received a search warrant to confiscate the plants, and did so without incident.

No charges are expected to be filed, Cameron said, because of the small amount of marijuana the plants produced.

"They may be able to connect it to somebody," he said.

"But based on the number of plants, we may not look into it."

TURN TO POT/A9



Driver trapped when truck flips

Pot: Iraq effects

CONTINUED FROM A1

OPNET conducts aerial observations whenever aircraft are available, he said.

Previously, the National Guard provided OPNET with the helicopters.

But, because of National Guard operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as decreased funding, those helicopters had not been available, he said.

Cameron said the DEA is not likely to provide the helicopters on an annual basis since not a lot of marijuana is produced on the Peninsula.

"They are spending five days to find a handful of plants," he said.

"The DEA is less interested in supplying helicopters in wide areas where the chance of a find is much less."

OPNET is a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement agency made up of officers from the Port Angeles and Sequim police departments, Clallam County Sheriff's Department, State Patrol and Border Patrol.

Reporter Tom Callis can be reached at 360-417-3532 or tom.callis@peninsuladailynews.com.

GO BACK TO SCHOOL IN STYLE!

E N V Y