

# **Two Face Weapons Charges: Cross-River Crime Task Force Works To Take Guns, Drugs, Fugitive Off Streets**

by Brian Brueggemann  
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ALTON - Two men were arrested on weapons charges and a third was apprehended on a nationwide fugitive warrant during a deployment Thursday of Madison County's Cross-River Crime Task Force.

The deployment on Thursday marked the unit's second saturation patrol and focused on the Alton area. Among the subjects taken into custody were Daron S. Hearn, 20, and Keith A. Sanders, 23, both of Alton. Hearn was charged with aggravated unlawful use of a weapon, with bail set at \$50,000. Sanders was charged with aggravated unlawful use of a weapon and possession of weapon by a felon, with bail set at \$50,000. Officers found a 9mm handgun in a vehicle occupied by Hearn and Sanders.

"This unit already is having an impact," said Major Nick Novacich, who serves as commander of the CrossRiver Crime Task Force. "This is an innovative approach to crime-fighting, one that aims to both fend off crime in a proactive manner, and to help in the apprehension of those who have committed crimes. As we continue to fine-tune the operation, I'm confident we'll continue to see meaningful results." The task force, comprised of officers from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies that operate in Madison County, utilizes real-time data from Automated License Plate Readers in conjunction with saturation patrols.

Also taken into custody was a man wanted out of Kansas on a nationwide extradition warrant. The warrant was issued in a felony stalking case. “You don’t see nationwide extradition warrants every day. They’re not issued for low-level or mid-level offenses,” Novacich said. In another traffic stop, an occupant of a vehicle was found to be in possession of suspected ecstasy (MDMA) and cocaine. Charges are pending the results of lab tests.

Alton Mayor David Goins said he’s grateful for the formation of the Cross-River Crime Task Force. “This is cutting-edge enforcement that will deter crime and get criminals off the streets, as well as guns and drugs. A big thank-you to the task force for coming to the Alton area to help make our community a safer place for our residents,” Goins said.

The formation of the Cross-River Crime Task Force began last year as an effort to stem the flow of crime into Madison County from across the Mississippi River. By coincidence, the unit’s most recent deployment came on the same day that a Madison County judge issued a first-degree murder conviction against a Missouri man whose vehicle fatally struck Brooklyn Police Officer Brian Pierce Jr. on the McKinley Bridge.

The man was fleeing from police, back to Missouri, when he hit Officer Pierce, who was standing outside his patrol vehicle after placing a spike strip across the bridge.

At trial, a Brooklyn Police officer testified that one in three attempted traffic stops in his jurisdiction results in the driver trying to flee across the bridge.

“The members of this unit were hand-picked. I’m proud of the group we’ve assembled and proud to be a part of it,” Novacich said. Other results of the deployment included: • Driver cited for suspended license, uninsured vehicle and suspended registration

- Discovery of a hypodermic syringe with substance believed to be contraband.
- Subject arrested for active warrant.
- Motorist taken into custody on multiple active warrants and issued citations for suspended license and uninsured vehicle.