

DiLeonardi plans new narcotics unit

By Philip Wattley

A NEW AND expanded Chicago police narcotics unit to combat the billion-dollar drug racket here is being planned by Acting Supt. Joseph DiLeonardi, The Tribune has learned.

In less than a month on the job, DiLeonardi already has created a new unit to combat an upsurge in rape, and imposed major changes in the department's top command.

Sources close to DiLeonardi said that his aim in creating a new narcotics unit is nothing short of smashing the Mexican Connection—the drug pipeline that uses Chicago as a major distribution center for heroin called "Mexican Mud."

THE HEROIN IS shipped from Mexico to Chicago and from here to cities throughout the eastern half of the United States, Canada, and even Puerto Rico.

"I considered narcotics and gang violence the biggest crime problems in Chicago," DiLeonardi said. "I want a centralized narcotics unit. Right now we have too many units dealing with the problem. They're going off in all directions."

While discussing the narcotics problem in general terms, DiLeonardi declined to reveal his specific plans for correcting the situation. But those close to him said the new narcotics unit is his answer. He has urged the creation of such a unit in the past.

DILEONARDI REPORTEDLY believes that an improved narcotics unit not only could curtail the drug traffic here but could help prevent other crimes.

DiLeonardi is convinced that addicts seeking money for drugs are a leading cause of such crimes as muggings and burglaries.

Others have pointed out that the fortunes amassed by top drug dealers makes them a major source of corruption and bribery.

The Police Department's narcotics unit now is part of the vice control division that also combats prostitution and gambling.

Sources said DiLeonardi plans to expand the narcotics unit into a separate division under the overall direction of William Duffy, deputy superintendent for inspectional services.

A tough, street-smart police official is being sought to command the division, probably with the rank of deputy chief of detectives.

Long range investigations and undercover work to penetrate large-scale drug rings will be among the division's responsibilities.

THE DECISION TO place the new narcotics unit in Duffy's bureau of inspectional services is seen as a move to give that bureau a greater role in the department.

Duffy is considered the department's top expert on organized crime. DiLeonardi said that much of the narcotics traffic is highly organized. Police said the organizations include both the crime syndicate and other tightly knit families such as the Herreras on the South Side, suspected of being a major source of Mexican Mud.

Investigators said the importance of Chicago in the drug-smuggling world can be seen by the fact that drugs bound from Mexico to Puerto Rico are sent here first.

Investigators said that at one time drugs were shipped by sea directly from Mexico to Puerto Rico. But so many smugglers were arrested that major dealers decided to send the drugs to Chicago and from here to Puerto Rico, in the belief that sending drugs from Chicago to San Juan is no more difficult than sending them from Chicago to Detroit.

COMBATTING THE drug traffic is the responsibility of the federal and state governments as well as the Chicago Police Department.

But the Police Department's efforts have been fragmented.

In addition to the small narcotics unit of the police vice control division, the gang crimes unit, the tactical units in each police district, and the intelligence division all have been involved.

DiLeonardi said that one big problem has been that one unit doesn't always tell the others what it is doing. More than once, several units have been working undercover on the same drug ring at the same time.

On other occasions, drug rings have operated without police interference, each unit blaming the other for the oversight.

In keeping with his practice of holding top commanders responsible for the work of their units, DiLeonardi said, "I want to fix responsibility so I can go to one person and determine the problem and what's being done. When I ask questions about narcotics, I want answers."