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Obama to step up military support of Syrian rebels
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Operation: 'Spa City Special'

Multi-agency probe targeting violent crime, drugs leads to 24 arrests

STEVEN MROSS
The Sentinel-Record

A multi-agency sting operation targeting drug trafficking and violent crimes in Hot Springs and Garland County culminated Thursday with 19 federal indictments and 24 arrests.

Conner Eldridge, U.S. attorney for the Western District of Arkansas, Hot Springs Police Chief David Flory, Garland County Sheriff Larry Sanders, Prosecuting Attorney Steve Oliver and Constance Hester with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were all on hand at an afternoon press conference at the Hot Springs Police Department to announce the results of the year-long Operation: "Spa City Special."

Many of the suspects were arraigned that afternoon in U.S. District Court in the Federal Building in Hot Springs.

Calling them "true public servants," Eldridge commended the "coordinated efforts" of the HSPD and its street crimes unit, ATF, GCSD, and the prosecuting attorney's office, which "worked long hours" to bring the operation about, noting they "took a strong step forward in combating the problems plaguing Hot Springs."

Eldridge said this operation was the "latest in a long line" of operations targeting the drug and gun violence problem in all parts of the Western District, from Texarkana to El Dorado to Hot Springs, "with all agencies dedicated

STING, PAGE 7A

The Sentinel-Record/Richard Rasmussen

SUSPECTS INDICTED: Some of 24 suspects arrested in a year-long sting operation dubbed Operation: "Spa City Special" are escorted into the Federal Building by members of the Hot Springs Police SWAT team and agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to be arraigned in U.S. District Court in Hot Springs. The operation was conducted by the U.S. Attorney's office, HSPD, ATF and other agencies.

Oaklawn expansion approved

DON THOMASON
The Sentinel-Record

The Hot Springs Planning Commission approved a site plan with conditions Thursday night for a 58,085-square-foot expansion of the gaming area at Oaklawn Park.

Oaklawn Park General Manager Eric Jackson said earlier that the expansion is not part of previous expansions at the track to house its electronic games of skill.

Oaklawn Park opened a 52,500-square-foot expansion on May 13, 2009, increasing its number of gaming positions to 650.

The second phase of the expansion included renovating a 37,500-square-foot area in the south end of the grandstand, bringing the total project area to 90,000 square feet.

Jackson told *The Sentinel-Record* on Monday that the expansion is a result of "organic growth that we've enjoyed over the last three or four years since the state allowed us to have electronic

OAKLAWN, PAGE 9A

The Sentinel-Record/Richard Rasmussen

JAIL CEREMONY: County Judge Rick Davis, right, addresses a crowd of county and city officials, and volunteers, during a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday at the site of the new Garland County Detention Center, 3564 Albert Pike Road, as Sheriff Larry Sanders, left, and Circuit Judge Marcia Hearnsberger listen.

Groundbreaking held for new jail

DON THOMASON
The Sentinel-Record

Months of planning by dozens of county officials and volunteers came to fruition Thursday morning with the official groundbreaking for the new Garland County Detention Center.

A crowd of about 200 former and current county and city officials, Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee members, and interested citizens gathered at the 54-acre site at 3564 Albert Pike Road for the ceremony.

Voters approved a temporary five-eighths cent sales tax in October 2011 to fund construction of the almost $42 million detention center, and a three-eighths cent tax for operation and maintenance of the jail. Collection of the five-eighths cent tax began in April 2012 and will end when the construction bonds are paid. Collection of the permanent three-eighths cent tax began April 1.

County Judge Rick Davis said the groundbreaking was a reminder of how different individuals and groups in the county came together with a common purpose.

"It is a reminder that the voters of Garland County have taken a stand and sent a message that Garland County will have facilities in order to hold people accountable for their behavior; that there will be consequences for criminal acts and if you break the law in Garland County we will have a place for you to serve your time," Davis said.

"With the October 2011 vote, the people of this county also said that we will have a safer place, not only for the inmates and people awaiting court dates, but also for our detention center staff," he said.

The new detention center will have more than 156,000 square feet to address the overcrowding, safety issues and deficiencies of the current jail, and house approximately 474 inmates.

Due to recent wet weather, site preparation work is slightly behind schedule, but work has started on the pre-cast cells and walls for the new jail. Davis said he has been assured that

JAIL, PAGE 7A

Corps reopens more rec areas, campsites as water recedes

MARK GREGORY
Managing editor

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Thursday that it has reopened more recreation areas and campsites as high water on Lake Ouachita continues to recede.

Several swimming areas and beaches remain closed, along with a number of campsites, according to the Corps of Engineers' latest update.

FLOODING, PAGE 9A

Submitted photo

HIGH WATER: Campsite 52 at Crystal Springs Recreation Area remained closed Thursday due to high water on Lake Ouachita. Campsites 23-43, 47-48 and 51-55 are still closed at the popular campground. Photo is courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

State, feds file lawsuit over oil spill

CHUCK BARTELS
The Associated Press

NORTH LITTLE ROCK — State and federal authorities want a judge to find ExxonMobil broke the law when a pipeline failed at Mayflower and spilled an estimated 150,000 gallons of crude oil in a neighborhood and adjacent waterway, authorities announced Thursday.

Christopher Thyer, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, and

OIL SPILL, PAGE 3A

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Weather

MOSTLY SUNNY. HIGHS IN THE LOW 90S. LOWS IN THE HIGH 70S.
SUNRISE: 5:59 A.M.
SUNSET: 6:26 P.M.
MORE ON PAGE 2A

SATURDAY: HIGH 92° LOW 70°
SUNDAY: HIGH 92° LOW 72°

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