

7th Judicial Task Force reports crime rate on the decline

7th Judicial Crime Task Force Director Russell Barker has announced that by using new technology and modern intercommunication methods, his agency has contributed to the rapid decline of crime in Anderson County.

In a report published by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation last year, it was revealed that crime has been reduced by 42-percent over the last eight years in Anderson County.

The figure is more than double the rate of crime reduction seen throughout the state.

One of the most vital and often overlooked means of this continued success is the 7th Judicial Crime Task Force. Since its inception in 2012 under the leadership of District Attorney General Dave Clark, the 7th Judicial Crime Task Force (CTF) has consistently been one of the most effective agencies in the fight against narcotics and violent crime.

Since 2014, the CTF has been managed by Director Russell Barker, a 15-year veteran of the Clinton Police Department who oversees all day to day operations. The CTF, made up of six full time members, is a self-sufficient agency that is funded by grants and narcotics seizures.

The Anderson County Sheriff's Department, Clinton, Oak Ridge, Oliver Springs, and Rocky Top Departments are all represented. Most recently the CTF made headlines with 35 arrests and 119 indictments in a large scale drug trafficking ring operating out of Oak Ridge.

7th Judicial Crime Task Force Director Russell Barker says that information sharing and intercommunication between agencies has been vital to the operation's success. "The narcotics trade in Anderson County is interwoven and often crosses jurisdictional lines within our county. Building and maintaining solid working relationships with all departments is an essential part of what we do," Barker said.

"It is not uncommon for surveillance and information gathering to last for months or years on sensitive complex cases ranging from marijuana to heroin distribution."

"Our cases are often modeled after federal agencies, a method not historically used by local districts."

"The modern policing approach has consistently worked, with many of the CTF's cases being adopted federally by the DEA and ATF."

By targeting mid to upper level drug dealers with the most cutting edge technology available, Barker hopes the CTF will continue to send a message to the local criminal population that Anderson County is a very bad place to conduct business.

"There is plenty of work left to do in the fight against crime here in Anderson County, but it is a fight we are winning."