On Thursday January 24th, 2013, members of the Boone Police Department made three felony arrests. These arrests were the result of a lengthy multi-agency drug investigation. During this investigation, Narcotics officers learned that a local man named Ramses Lopez was part of a large-scale narcotics trafficking organization. It was also learned that the other members of this organization were from different areas in our state. Lopez is responsible for the import of narcotics into our area. Many different investigative techniques were used by law enforcement during this investigation.

Included in these techniques was the use of officers working in an undercover capacity. These undercover officers were able to infiltrate the organization and make several purchases of narcotics from targets within this distribution ring.

“This type of investigation is very dangerous and labor intensive. Because of complexity and jurisdictional issues, it takes many agencies working together to accomplish the mission. Each agency listed below brought something to the table and helped make this case a success. This case is one of the largest powder cocaine cases ever worked in this area and I am proud of each officer that spent the long hours it took to shut this drug ring down. Our citizens are safer as a result of this investigation” –Chief Dana Crawford

The agencies involved in this investigation were: Boone Police Department, Watauga County Sheriff’s Office, United States Department of Homeland Security, NC State Bureau of Investigation, NC Alcohol Law Enforcement, Beech Mountain Police Department, Ashe County Sheriff’s Office and Mooresville Police Department.

“The players in an organization of this scale are not unintelligent and it can be tough to gather enough information to convict them in court. We are especially thankful to the Beech Mountain Police Department for their role in this investigation, without them this case may have never happened. – Sgt Chris Hatton

The investigation was brought to a close when the listed suspects were arrested during a counter-drug operation in Boone. This particular operation resulted in the seizure of over (1) pound of powder cocaine. This amount of cocaine has a street value of approximately $20,000.

The total amount of powder cocaine seized during this investigation is approximately (2) pounds. This amount of powder cocaine has a street value of $38,500. This investigation continues and more arrests are expected.

The following persons were arrested for the following charges:

Ramses Nava Lopez	Jose Ma Pineda Guzman
H/M, DOB 03-26-1972	H/M DOB 10-14-1963
851 Blowing Rock Road, apt#11	247 McCoy Road

Boone, NC 28607
Watauga County

Apex, NC 27523
Wake County

Sonya Orrostieta Velazquez
H/F, DOB 10-24-1967
247 McCoy Road
Apex, NC 27523
Wake County

Each of these arrestees were charged with one count of Trafficking in Cocaine and one count of Conspiracy to Traffic in Cocaine, each were lodged in the Watauga County Jail under a $100,000 secured bond.