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New Ohio Highway Patrol effort targets drug trafficking

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COLUMBUS -- New efforts to crack down on drug trafficking in Ohio include the introduction of legislation targeting hidden compartments in vehicles and changes in how drivers can use the State Highway Patrol hot line, which will get a new number.

Authorities are using a multifaceted approach to try to stop people from transporting illegal drugs through Ohio and to its communities, said Lt. Anne Ralston, a patrol spokeswoman. In 2011, troopers seized almost 6 million grams of illegal narcotics and contraband valued at more than \$69 million and made more than 6,000 drug arrests.

"When we look at how drugs are moving across the U.S., Ohio is really in the thick of this," she said. "A majority of the routes that drugs are taking either go through or to Ohio."

Gov. John Kasich detailed the changes at a patrol event Friday. His office said troopers seized about 13,000 pounds of illegal drugs and made 6,000 drug arrests in 2011. So far this year, 948 arrests have been made, 219 more than during the same period in 2011.

State Sen. Jim Hughes, a Columbus Republican, made an initial submission this week of a bill that would make it a fourth-degree felony if a hidden metal compartment for stashing drugs is found inside a vehicle. Offenders could spend 18 months in prison or be fined \$5,000.

Article continued here: <http://www.thenews-messenger.com/article/20120225/NEWS01/202250322/Ohio-unveils-efforts-targeting-drug-trafficking>

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