

## SMALLVILLE STORY

You are a reporter for *Smallville Online*, which serves a city of 120,000. As part of your reporting duties, you call the Smallville Police Department at just after 8 am today to see if there have been any newsworthy arrests overnight or earlier this morning.

Smallville Police Officer Henry Jenkins tells you that, indeed, there was a major bust several hours earlier. He e-mails you a press release. You may quote from it and attribute statements to him. Here it is:

*At approximately 7:30 pm yesterday we received a 911 call from the Target store at 1313 Nile Blvd. The store manager reported that three women threatened two employees with a firearm.*

*Four officers responded and learned significant details of the incident.*

*The suspects had been under observation in the store for several minutes and were seen to shoplift numerous articles of clothing. As they neared the store exit, they were intercepted by two employees assigned to security duties. Immediately, one of the women produced a handgun, pointed at the employees and made verbal threats to cause them bodily harm with the weapon. Another woman punched and kicked one of the employees.*

*The suspects then ran outside, while the employees observed from a safe distance. They who saw the assailants board a late-model Lexus SUV driven by a male who rapidly dove away. Fortunately, the employees were able to record the license plate number of the vehicle, which they provided to officers at the scene.*

*Using the plate information, our officers were able to ascertain the address of the registered owner, Lisa Belkin.*

*Four officers then arrived at the address on Memory Lane, at 9:57 p.m., knocked on the front door and were greeted by a man who identified himself as Kevin Goldberg.*

*Officers asked to enter the premises, and Goldberg allowed them in. The officers explained they were investigating an assault and shoplifting incident. They told Goldberg that they suspected someone in the home was directly tied to the events at the Target store.*

*At that point two women emerged from a hallway and in a threatening manner ordered the officers to leave.*

*The man identified as Goldberg also angrily insisted the officers leave, and said they would not answer questions, claiming they had nothing to do with the Target incident.*

*Goldberg then suddenly began to pull a handgun from his waistband.*

*Perceiving a potentially lethal threat, an officer fired his service weapon, striking Goldberg twice. Paramedics were immediately summoned and transported the suspect to Fordham Community Hospital. Goldberg is reported to be in critical condition.*

*Three women in the home resisted arrest, striking officers with their fists, before they were subdued and taken into custody.*

*With probable cause established, an officer-conducted search of the premises followed. The search produced some 60 articles of clothing, many with tags attached, several firearms, a large quantity of computers and electronic equipment, cameras and assorted household goods.*

*In addition, three kilos of cocaine, 4.6 kilos of what has preliminarily determined to be pure methamphetamine and 40 kilos of marijuana. We do not yet know the exact value of the drugs confiscated, but a preliminary estimate is that the total street value is at least \$447,000.*

*It is important to note that this is the largest drug confiscation in the city's history.*

*The suspects have been identified as Lisa Belkin, 26, of Smallville; Gertrudis Cano, 30, of San Diego, CA, Jenifer Wade, 28 of Los Angeles and Kevin Goldberg, 33, of Newport Beach.*

*Goldberg has been identified as a California Highway Patrol Officer. He was not on duty at the time of his arrest. At this time, he is under police guard at the hospital.*

*They have been booked on several charges. They are*

*Suspicion of attempted homicide, aggravated assault, assault on a peace officer, resisting arrest, felony theft and burglary.*

*They are also charged with suspicion of felony drug possession with intent to distribute.*

*Based on our investigation thus far, we have reason to believe that the suspects are members of a burglary ring that has operated in Smallville for at least six months.*

*Further, we have recovered records and documents that strongly suggest the suspects are linked to Mexico's Sinaloa Drug Cartel, one of the world's most powerful and notorious narcotics trafficking organizations.*

*If confirmed, it would be the first arrest here involving allies of this criminal enterprise.*

*With today's arrests, we are confident we have taken down a burglary and drug distribution ring. We expect to continue our investigation into this criminal enterprise and could well make additional arrests. To aid in this investigation, we will be cooperating with the Drug Enforcement Administration, or DEA, and other federal law enforcement agencies.*

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*At about 5 p.m., you get a text message from the Smallville Police press office advising*

*that the prisoners will be transferred from the local jail to the much larger Branch County Prison. You're advised the suspects will briefly be available for questions as they walk out of the police station in custody.*

*An hour later, you and several other reporters are standing on the station steps when officers bring out the handcuffed women.*

*Journalists shout questions. Out of the din, you hear this question: "Are you guilty of the crimes?" One of the women, later identified as Jennifer Wade, replies in a loud voice: "No, but the cops are guilty of brutality. They hit us. They shot Kevin (Goldberg) for no reason. He was unarmed."*

*Another reporter asks Wade: "You have proof? Those are serious accusations."*

*Wade: "Damn right we have proof of that and other crimes these cops are guilty of. It will come out in court."*

*With that the suspects are loaded into a van and driven away.*

*You spot Smallville Police Chief Kevin Whitaker and ask him about what Wade said.*

*He replies, "Keep in mind these are some very tough and dangerous criminals. Hell, one of them is a rogue cop.*

*"This stuff about him being unarmed, that's bullshit. He went for a gun*

*That should tell you something. They're violent and dangerous. So, some aggressive interrogation was called for. We are pretty sure they are part of the Sinaloa Cartel, people capable of savage brutality."*

*You press him: "Are you saying that physical force was used while questioning them?"*

*Whitaker replies: "Call it what you like, but we weren't going to treat them with velvet gloves."*

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Write a news story of **between 475 and 500 words**. As you organize and write, ask yourself what is the most significant news?

A police officer was shot and is in critical condition. This alone is major news that undoubtedly would draw national coverage. Obviously, it is almost unheard of for cops to intentionally one of their own.

But there is also other quite significant news to report.

A substantial quantity of drugs was confiscated, a potential link to a major drug trafficking organization was uncovered, store employees were threatened with a gun and assaulted, stolen goods were recovered, and one of the suspects is a cop.

Clearly all of this can't be accommodated in the lead, but some it can. An essential task is to decide what to incorporate into your 35-word lead.

The bulk of the information is the police version. It is authoritative information, but it needs to be carefully attributed.

Be aware that the suspects are not guilty at this point, just booked on suspicion of a variety of crimes. The next step would be for prosecutors to decide what crimes, if any, they should be formally charged with.

Don't allow your writing to be influenced by how the information is organized in the press release. It's not in media format. Rather it's presented in the dry, bureaucratic fashion police favor.

Don't start with the day and place. Don't use the women's or man's names in the lead. Identify them by name later.

Those arrested made some serious allegations of their own, and you have response of sorts from a cop.

Also note that some information is missing, such as the nature of the injuries the suspects sustained when they were arrested. It's a good practice to make clear not only what's known, but what is not known, too.

