



PLUG

Walk

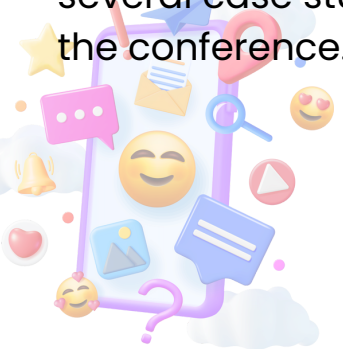
Investigating Social Media Drug & Gun Traffickers

They call themselves the “plug,” and it could be argued that they pose one of the biggest threats to public safety in our communities. Young adults and teenagers are actively trafficking narcotics and firearms throughout the country, and this directly correlates to the rise of juvenile overdose deaths and increase in juveniles / young adults possessing and using firearms. This is not just another social media class.

This course will explore the recent rise of plugs within our communities, their motivations for trafficking firearms and drugs, and the influence of mainstream media and hip hop / rap on the plug culture. Students will leave this course with training and experience on the methods and techniques that plugs are exploiting to traffic contraband through social media, encrypted communication applications such as Telegram, VOIP applications, and laundering money through P2P payment applications such as CashApp. The course will prepare students for these investigations by immersing them into the way “plugs” talk and communicate with customers through jargon and emojis, verification methods commonly used by plugs to vet their customers, and more. No need to take the instructor’s word – students will hear it directly from a plug turned informant in a recorded debrief.

Students will explore creative investigative techniques law enforcement can exploit to investigate the plug. This includes the use of undercover social media accounts, UC buys from social media and encrypted communication applications, search warrants and pen registers to social media platforms, connected investigations, “piggyback” search warrants, and the value of confidential informants who are involved in this culture. The course will include several case studies to prepare students to take on these investigations after the conference.

February 20, 2026
Friday Morning Closing Speaker
8am - 11am





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Investigating Social Media Drug & Gun Traffickers

Detective Tim Gooler is employed with a bay area police department in Northern California. Det. Gooler is currently assigned to an investigative unit focused on property crimes, including firearms trafficking and works in a plain-clothes / undercover capacity. Det. Gooler has conducted numerous investigations involving the trafficking and sale of firearms and narcotics by “plugs” through social media applications such as Instagram, Snapchat, and more recently Telegram, as well as money laundering through applications such as CashApp and Venmo. Det. Gooler has debriefed and interviewed numerous “plugs” to gain a unique perspective and understanding of their lifestyle, motivations, and methods of doing business. Det. Gooler is an instructor on social media and technology-based narcotics and firearms trafficking investigations. Det. Gooler has instructed over 5,000 law enforcement officers on those topics nationwide since 2021, including at numerous conferences, summits and POST certified courses. Det. Gooler instructs for Tradecraft Training, HIDTA (Bay Area, Central Valley, and Los Angeles), and the Robert Presley Institute of Criminal Investigations. Det. Gooler has instructed for Narcotics Associations in California, Washington, Nevada, and Iowa.

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