

Task force gains support

ficking," he said. "Violence is very much involved with cocaine trafficking."

Saying that the situation was "really reaching serious proportions, Almy said his office also has been handling more cocaine-related crimes.

"More and more cocaine is being imported in this state, and it's being used more and more," said Almy. "It's beginning to affect innocent people."

Cohen said that "no one existing law enforcement agency is dealing with cocaine trafficking. It has to be a multi-faceted approach having a coordinated, unified approach at the state and federal level."

A cocaine task force already has been in operation in Cumberland County since July and is "working very well at the moment," he said. A third task force is currently being proposed for York County.

Cohen said it was "somewhat premature" to discuss his tri-county project, which is "still in

the draft stage." He said, however, he envisioned a "covert group working under cover" composed of six to seven fulltime officers "donated by the municipalities and the counties." No new money would have to be provided, he said.

The federal official said the purpose of the task force would be to target "not only the retailers, but also those higher up the level of hierarchy" for arrest and prosecution. Coordination of the group would be handled through his office in Bangor, in cooperation with the district attorney's office, he said.

Cohen said he also met with Bangor Police Chief Francis Woodhead, who is heading a planning committee of police chiefs from the three counties. That committee is seeking ways to provide the personnel and vehicles "to make this a viable unit," said Woodhead on Wednesday.

"It's coming along," said the police chief. "We think it's going to work."