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## ***News Release***

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### **INDOOR MARIJUANA CULTIVATION RING DISMANTLED**

*Group Connected to Grows in Elk Grove, Sacramento, Milpitas, and San Jose areas*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Assistant Special Agent in Charge Gordon Taylor and Elk Grove Police Department Chief Robert Lehner, announced today the culmination of a large scale indoor marijuana grow investigation that began in the Elk Grove area and led law enforcement to the San Francisco Bay Area. This enforcement operation resulted in the service of 15 federal search warrants, the arrest of 9 individuals, the seizure of 7 indoor marijuana growing operations ranging from very sophisticated to modest, and nearly 2,500 marijuana plants. These indoor marijuana grows had the capacity to produce over one ton of marijuana annually, with an estimated street value of nearly \$10 million dollars.

The Elk Grove Police Department began this investigation and shortly thereafter requested assistance from the DEA Sacramento District Office, Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CI). Law enforcement conducted an extensive investigation into this organization. According to the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint, officers identified several residences in the Sacramento region and Bay Area that were allegedly being used as marijuana cultivation sites by the group.

“The proliferation of indoor marijuana grows remains a serious issue in the Sacramento region. These locations have the potential for fires, many homes are left with molds, and poisonous pesticides are often poured down drains and into our water systems. DEA will be persistent in tracking these criminal organizations that set up shop in our neighborhoods and pose a threat to members of the community,” stated DEA Assistant Special Agent in Charge Gordon Taylor.

On June 30, 2010, 15 federal search warrants were served at multiple residences in Elk Grove, Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, and Milpitas. Law enforcement discovered marijuana grows at the following locations:

- 9276 Balboa Park, Elk Grove, CA (1,097 marijuana plants seized)
- 9277 Starfish Way, Elk Grove, CA (298 marijuana plants seized)

- 7109 Lawnwood Drive, Sacramento, CA (98 marijuana plants seized)
- 8628 German Drive, Sacramento, CA (109 marijuana plants seized)
- 2714 Rainfield Drive, San Jose, CA (359 marijuana plants seized)
- 821 Stickroth Drive, Milpitas, CA (493 marijuana plants seized)
- 6656 Foothill Blvd., #A, Oakland, CA (10 marijuana plants seized)

Agents subsequently confirmed that power theft was occurring at each grow location, except for the residence at 6656 Foothill Blvd., #A, in Oakland.

As a result of the operation officers arrested 9 individuals allegedly associated with the grow sites. The affidavit details the specific roles members of the organizations held. A “supervisor” had a more significant role in the organization, shared connections with other “supervisors”, associated with one another, and had access to more than one indoor marijuana growing operation. The “workers” appeared to have limited association with only one or two “supervisors”, and their primary role was believed to be tending to the plants at the marijuana grow site, staying at the location for hours or days at a time, watering, trimming, and processing the marijuana for sales.

The following individuals were arrested on June 30, 2010, in connection with the investigation: Nhung Thi Vu, 51, of San Francisco, Hung Ngoc Pham, 28, of Sacramento, Cuong Thoi Long, 54, of Sacramento, Diep Hoang Vu, 38, of Oakland, Phuong Pham, 35, of Sacramento, Quoc Bui Long, 44, of San Jose, Chien Minh Le, 41, of Oakland, Thuy Thi Tran, 51, of Oakland, and Tuan Chu, 28, city of residence is unknown. All individuals are charged with conspiracy to manufacture at least 1,000 marijuana plants, manufacturing marijuana, and knowingly maintaining a place for manufacturing marijuana. All defendants had their initial appearance in Federal Court in Sacramento on July 1, 2010.

The Elk Grove Police Department, DEA Sacramento District Office, Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigations Division, and Immigration Customs Enforcement conducted this investigation, with assistance from the U.S. Marshals Service, Attorney General’s Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, Sacramento Police Department, El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office, California Highway Patrol, Central Valley HIDTA, the DEA offices in San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland, Fresno, Bakersfield, and Redding, and the United States Attorney’s Office in the Eastern District of California.

If convicted of conspiracy to manufacture marijuana and manufacturing marijuana, the defendants face a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 10 years, a maximum prison term of life, and a fine of up to \$4,000,000. If convicted of maintaining a place for manufacturing marijuana, the defendants face a maximum prison term of 20 years and a fine of up to \$500,000. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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