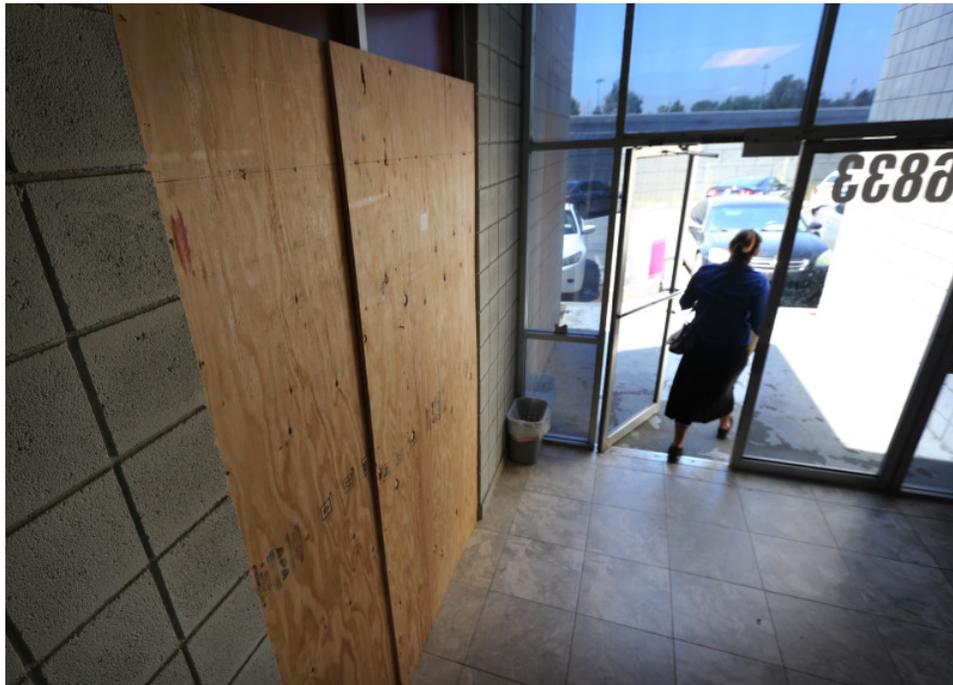


EXHIBIT A

LOCAL NEWS

How Riverside closed all its medical marijuana dispensaries — 118 in 10 years



Boards cover up what was once G6, a marijuana dispensary, at a building on Indiana Avenue in Riverside on Tuesday, May 23. Photo by Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG



By **ALICIA ROBINSON** | arobinson@scng.com | The Orange County Register

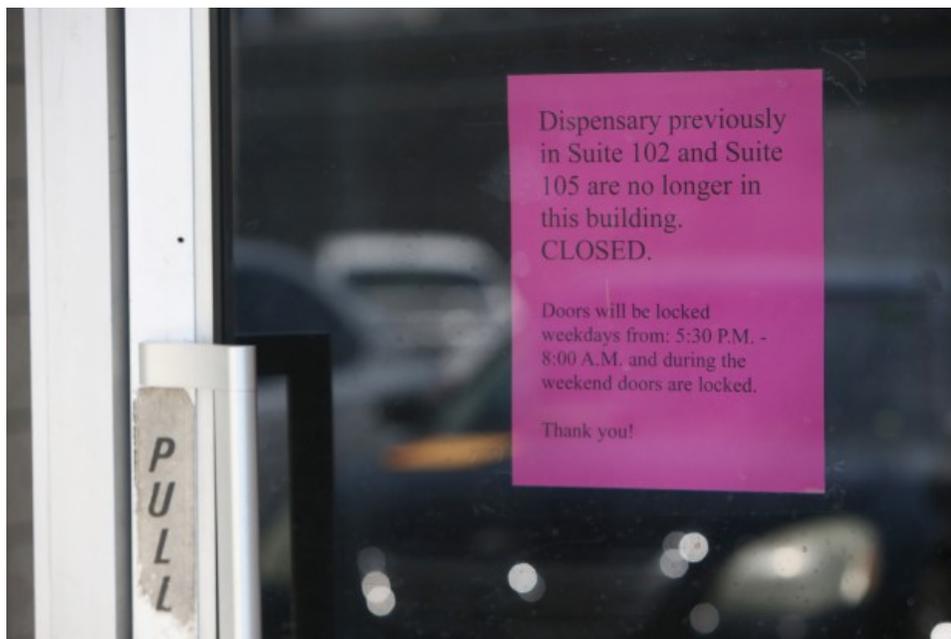
PUBLISHED: May 24, 2017 at 4:47 pm | UPDATED: May 25, 2017 at 7:14 am

For some California cities, officials say trying to shut down illegal pot dispensaries can seem like an endless game of Whack-a-Mole — close one down, and another pops up.

But in Riverside, officials appear to have whacked every last mole.

Deputy City Attorney Neil Okazaki told council members Tuesday, May 9, that city efforts have rid Riverside of all but one pot dispensary.

The last facility shut May 12, days before another opened Tuesday, May 16. Then the new one agreed to close after city officials visited the next day. Okazaki said Wednesday, May 24, that officials believe there remain none in the city.



A note is informing customers that G6, a marijuana dispensary, is now closed hangs on an Indiana Avenue building in Riverside on Tuesday, May 23. Photo by Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG

Riverside has been working to eradicate medical marijuana dispensaries since banning them in its zoning code in 2007. In 2015, city voters [rejected a ballot measure](#) that would have allowed and regulated a small number of medical pot facilities.

A 1996 state law allows patients to use pot as medicine, and an initiative California voters approved last year says adults 21 and older can use the drug and grow small amounts. But those rules don't strip cities of the right to control or ban pot-related businesses.

This isn't the first time the city has reached zero, Okazaki said.

An earlier wave of dispensaries was [closed around 2013](#), when Riverside [won a California Supreme Court case](#) asserting cities' right to bar them.

But officials say more pot shops began opening again in the run-up to last November's election, when California voters [legalized adult use](#) of marijuana.

So the city renewed its vigilance, closing 16 dispensaries since Jan. 1, and a total of 118 since 2007.

Not everyone is cheering Riverside's accomplishment.

James De Aguilera, a Redlands attorney who represents dispensary operators including some that have tangled with Riverside, considers the city's approach misguided.

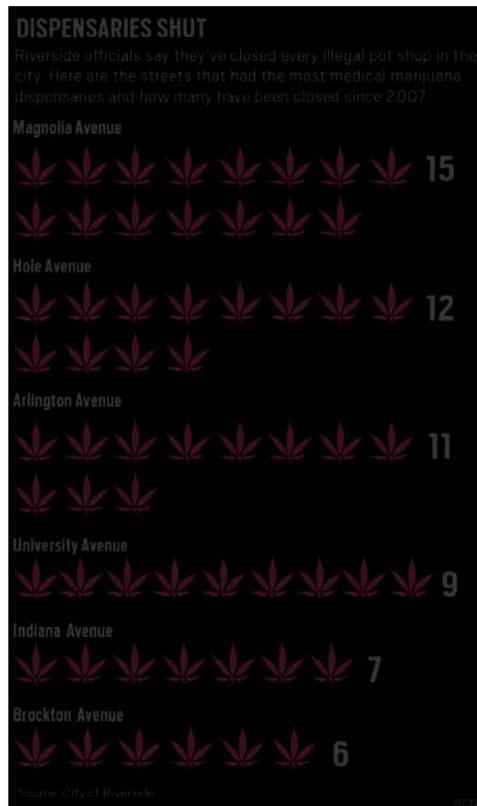
"To completely prohibit that which the state law says is allowed ... it's mind-boggling," he said.

"I'm not a personal advocate of marijuana, but when the voters vote, I think it's the responsibility in a democracy to listen to the intent of the voters."

How the city did it

Riverside's success contrasts with other Southern California cities that are looking for more tools to shutter pot shops.

Across the Santa Ana River from Riverside, Jurupa Valley has managed to get 40 dispensaries down to about a dozen that remain open in the past few years, but officials want more help from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and District Attorney's Office, Jurupa Valley City Councilman Verne Lauritzen said.



“It is a serious, expensive problem,” he said. “We get an injunction and we close one down, and the same owners go around the corner and ... they start up again.”

This month Pasadena officials approved a plan to shut off utilities to dispensaries that refuse to close. The Orange County city of Stanton sent police to raid a pot shop in April, according to news reports.

In the fight to close illegal pot shops, Riverside’s not-so-secret weapon is weedmaps.com, a website on which dispensaries and delivery services can advertise their location and products.

City attorneys check the site daily and also get complaints from residents, neighboring businesses and code enforcement officers.

When they learn about a pot shop, they approach the operators and ask them to comply with the city’s ban, Okazaki said. If operators refuse, the city goes to court to seek a temporary restraining order and then a permanent order to close the business.

The shops are usually in leased space, so the city reaches out to the landlord or property owner, some of whom say they weren’t aware dispensaries are illegal in Riverside, Okazaki said. Sometimes the owner will begin eviction proceedings, but the city can usually move faster to get the pot shop out.

Riverside police can help by observing the facility and making an undercover buy to determine it is indeed selling pot, Riverside Police Sgt. Andrew Misenheimer said.

“Most of the time we’re fairly sure that’s what’s occurring,” but going inside the shop lets police know if there’s armed security, how operators control customer access, and whether the set-up — barred windows, locked doors — creates other safety issues, he said.

The city attorney's office and police work with the fire department, code officers and building and safety staff to gather information and make the case in court that the dispensary is an illegal operation.

With stubborn operators who won't close, the court may appoint a receiver to take over the property. In February, Riverside took its harshest approach yet, raiding and boarding up [a Magnolia Center pot shop](#) that had reopened with a generator after the city turned off the utilities.

Under the prior city attorney, Greg Priamos, Riverside [spent more than \\$800,000](#) using outside lawyers on dispensary cases. Current City Attorney Gary Geuss has brought the work back in house, but officials don't have a cost estimate for the time employees have spent on pot issues.

Mixed response

Some welcome the city's efforts.

Robert Earle, who owns Magnolia Alignment on Merrill Avenue, said two dispensaries have opened by his auto shop, with one operating as recently as a few months ago. Sometimes he could smell the weed, and a line of customers would form as soon as the place opened.

A few years ago the city [raided a pot shop](#) behind him.

"They had the SWAT team come out with the whole gear," Earle said.

While he didn't see the dispensaries as a safety threat, he said, he's glad the city closed them.

"It's never good for the neighborhood."

City Councilman Mike Soubirous, whose ward had five dispensaries closed this year, said he gets complaints about pot shops opening in homes that are zoned for businesses such as a law office but border residential neighborhoods. City officials also cite robberies, shootings, and even one [kidnapping and torture](#) case connected with a dispensary.

Others seem ambivalent, like Sam Salib, who has owned Indiana Liquor & Market on the edge of the Casa Blanca neighborhood for 17 years. In 2013, a dispensary in the same shopping center as Salib's store was the scene of an altercation that led to [a security guard shooting](#) a driver, who struck the guard with his SUV.

Salib said he didn't see the shooting and the dispensary didn't affect his business. The people he saw going there looked old or sick, he said, and now that it's closed they may have to buy marijuana on the street.

Salib is fine with people using pot for medical reasons, and said it's hard to argue that the drug should be banned while alcohol is widely sold.

Riverside resident Patrick Maloney, 37, who uses medical marijuana for pain from a back injury, made a similar argument.

City leaders are "totally cool with us having bars," he said, but unlike alcohol, nobody dies from marijuana.

The Riverside dispensaries Maloney used to visit seemed clean and safe, he said, but now he has to go out of town for the drug.

"I just don't see why we should put any resources or time into fighting medical marijuana in this town when we should be putting time into fighting crime or homeless issues," he said.

De Aguilera, the attorney, predicted a wave of litigation as would-be pot entrepreneurs test whether the new law provides more protections for marijuana, as he believes it does.

"Prop. 64 is a whole new ballgame for cities. They just haven't seen it yet," he said. "Each city individually acting in its own personal interest and ignoring the impact to the region, that's not going to be acceptable under the law."

The Riverside City Council hasn't made a decision on whether to allow recreational pot to be grown or sold in the city.

Until and unless the ban on medical marijuana shops changes, Soubirous said, people need to understand the dispensaries are violating city rules and could be putting the public at risk.

"It'd be like if I wanted to open up my own restaurant and I said I don't care about any of the health and safety rules and I don't care about the (health department grade), I'm not going to pay a permit or anything," he said. "That's the problem that we have here."

BY THE NUMBERS

Riverside officials say their efforts to enforce a ban on medical marijuana dispensaries have paid off.

118

Dispensaries closed since 2007

0

Dispensaries open now in the city

Tags: [marijuana](#), [Top Stories PE](#)

Alicia Robinson

Alicia Robinson

Alicia Robinson covers Anaheim for The Orange County Register. She previously spent 10 years at The Press-Enterprise writing about Riverside and local government as well as Norco, Corona, homeless issues, Alzheimer's disease, streetcars, butterflies, horses and chickens. She grew up in the Midwest but earned Southern California native status during many hours spent in traffic. Two big questions Alicia tries to answer in stories about government are: how is it supposed to work, and how is it working?

[Follow Alicia Robinson @arobinson_pe](#)

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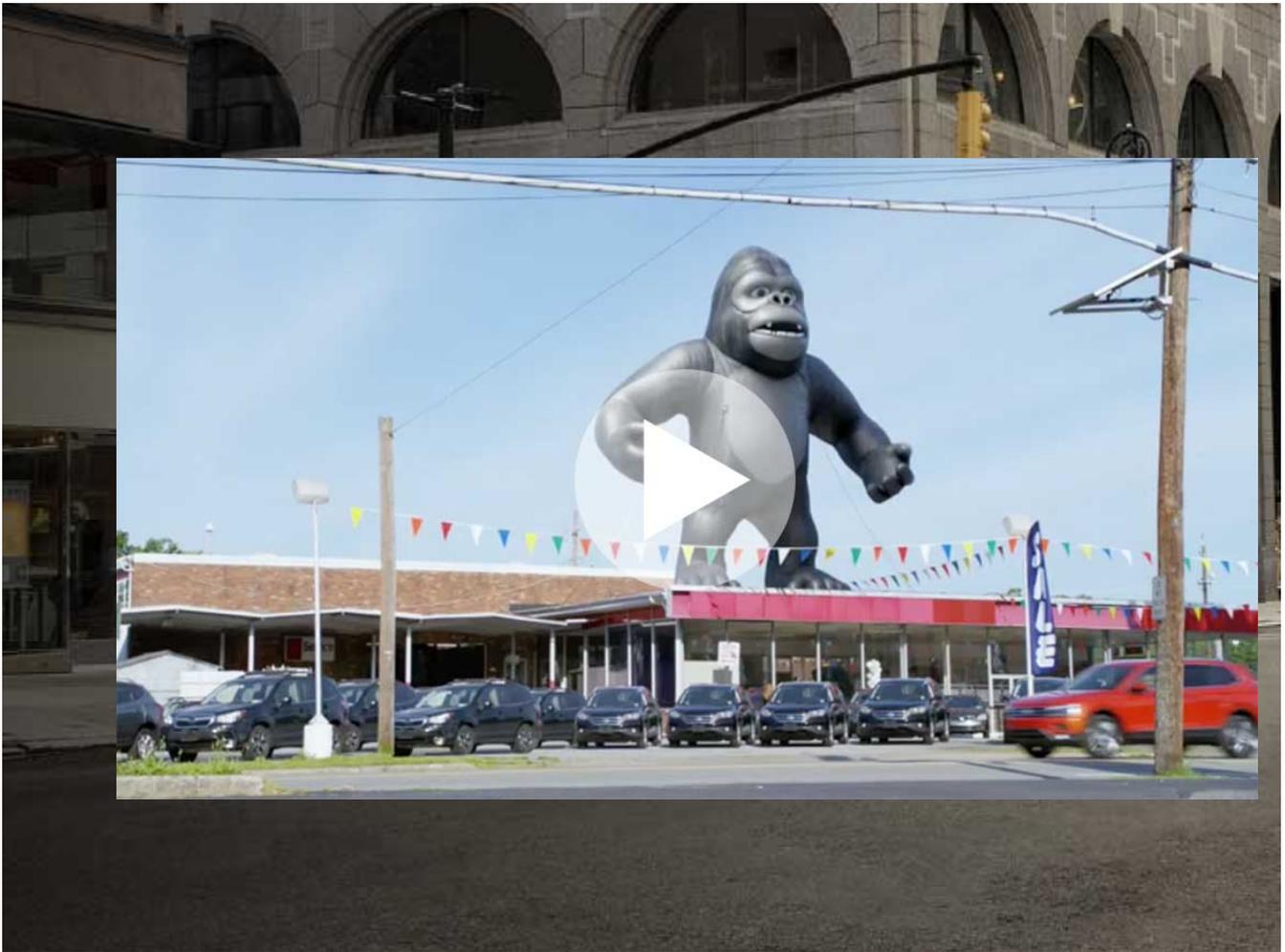
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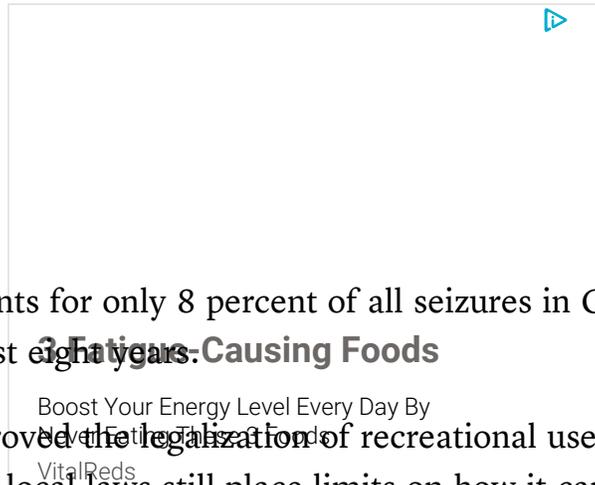
California marijuana grow houses account for 75 percent of U.S. indoor plants seized

BY BRAD BRANAN
bbranan@sacbee.com

OCTOBER 04, 2017 3:55 AM

California's illegally grown marijuana, once largely produced in national forests and other outdoor locations, is increasingly found indoors, federal statistics show.

In 2016, authorities seized 313,000 plants from indoor operations in California, which made up 75 percent of all indoor plants taken nationwide, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.



While the total accounts for only 8 percent of all seizures in California, that is the highest total in at least eight years.

3 Fatigues-Causing Foods

California voters approved the legalization of recreational use of marijuana in November 2016. But local laws still place limits on how it can be grown, and federal law prohibits it.

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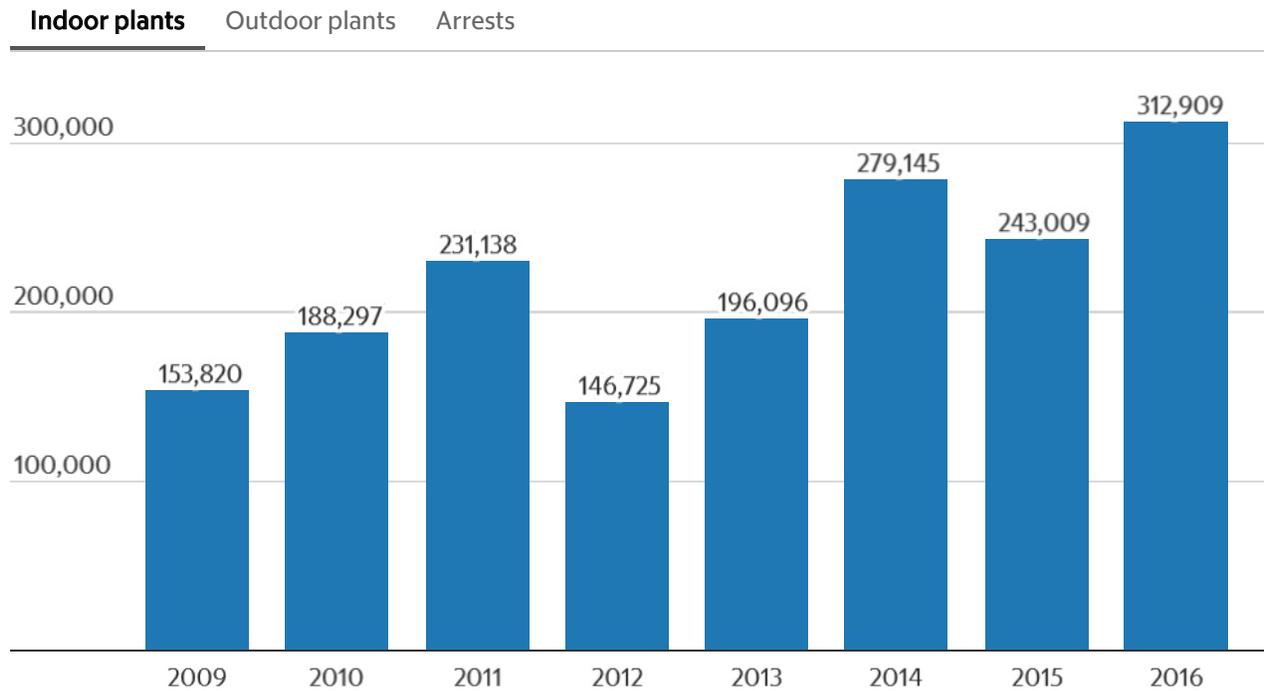
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A DEA spokeswoman in San Francisco said she was “unable to speculate” why authorities are seizing more indoor-grown marijuana. She noted that the figures come from local as well as federal law-enforcement agencies.

MARIJUANA SEIZURES IN CALIFORNIA

Law-enforcement agencies are seizing more marijuana from indoor grow operations across California.



Source: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration • [Get the data](#)

A November 2016 report by the DEA said marijuana is increasingly grown inside because “indoor production is more difficult for law enforcement to discover and has the advantage of not having to rely on climate conditions or growing seasons.”

Last month, law-enforcement agencies reported four separate busts of indoor growing operations in the Sacramento area – in Elk Grove, Roseville and unincorporated Yolo County. Authorities seized a total of more than 7,000 plants and arrested several suspects, including some with ties to the East Coast.

Brad Branan: 916-321-1065, @BradB_at_SacBee

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Rastafarian church leader arrested in crackdown on alleged illegal marijuana growing

BY CATHY LOCKE
clocke@sacbee.com

OCTOBER 03, 2017 10:07 PM

The leader of a Rastafarian church that operated a marijuana garden that figured in the Aug. 1 shooting of two Yuba County sheriff's deputies was among 18 people arrested Tuesday when the Sheriff's Office served search warrants at 12 alleged illegal marijuana growing sites in Yuba and Sacramento counties.

Heidi Grossman-Lepp, 46, was booked into Sacramento County Jail on suspicion of conspiracy, producing or cultivating marijuana and possession of marijuana for sale, according to a Yuba County Sheriff's Office news release.



Sheriff's officials reported that they were still compiling arrest information late Tuesday afternoon and the names of the other 17 people taken into custody likely will be released Wednesday.

Approximately \$21,000 in cash, 1,500 marijuana plants, more than five pounds of processed marijuana and eight guns were seized during the searches, the sheriff's office reported.

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Grossman-Lepp contacted the Yuba County Sheriff's Office on Aug. 1 to report that 33-year-old Mark Anthony Sanchez, who worked as a caretaker at the church's marijuana garden in rural Yuba County, had become violent with another church member.

When deputies arrived at the 9000 block of Marysville Road, they chased Sanchez to a nearby home. The deputies were fired upon when they entered the home and they shot back at Sanchez, Sheriff Steve Durfor told reporters the day of the shooting.

Sanchez died of his injuries. The officers survived. One was shot at least twice in the pelvic area and the other was struck in the arm.

The Yuba County Sheriff's Office was assisted Tuesday by various law enforcement teams including the Yuba City Police Department, Yuba Sutter Net 5 Task Force, the Sacramento High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California State Water Board, and Butte, Nevada and Colusa counties, according to the news release.

The 12 targeted sites are believed to have common ties that remain under investigation, according to the news release. They locations were identified as:

- 9000 block of Marysville Road in Oregon House
- 10400 block of Township Road in Browns Valley
- 15000 block of Winther Way in Dobbins
- 15000 block of Burch Lane in Brownsville
- 6000 block of Potts Trail in Browns Valley
- 6000 block of Dantoni Road in Marysville
- 12000 block of Regent Way in Oregon House
- 9000 block of Mason Way in Dobbins
- 13000 block of Rice's Crossing Way in Oregon House
- 3000 block of Jewett Road in Marysville
- 2000 block of H Street in Sacramento
- 30th Street in Sacramento

Cathy Locke: 916-321-5287, @lockecathy

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Yuba County deputies wounded in Rastafarian church shootout in fair condition



'Trimmigrant' working at Rastafarian church dies in shootout with Yuba County deputies



Officers search for a suspect after a shooting in Dobbins, Calif., Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2017. Two California sheriff's deputies were shot and wounded after they responded to reports of an armed and agitated man pulling up plants in the garden of a rural Rastafarian church, authorities said.

The shooter remained at large, and the Yuba County deputies were in serious condition and undergoing surgery at Sutter Roseville Medical Center after the shooting in the rural community of Oregon House about 55 miles north of Sacramento. (AP Photo/Sophia Bollag) **Sophia Bollag** - AP

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Yolo County seizes \$5 million worth of marijuana

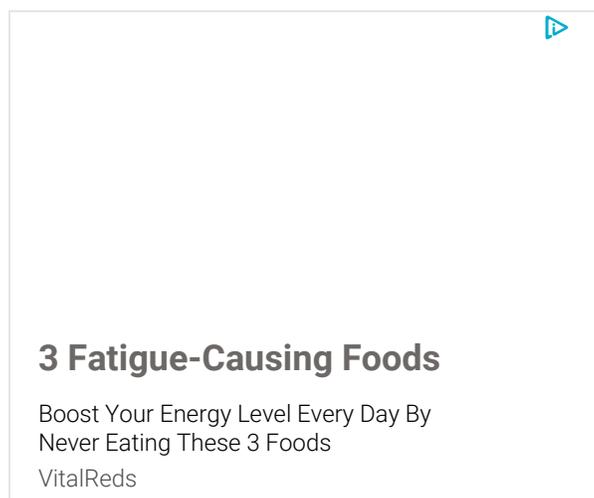
BY BRAD BRANAN

bbranan@sacbee.com

SEPTEMBER 26, 2017 7:12 AM

Yolo County officials say they have confiscated more than \$5 million worth of illegally grown marijuana in a case that has similarities to other recent suburban pot busts.

Sheriff's deputies removed 2,227 plants and 41 harvested pounds of marijuana during a raid Sept. 19 on a property in the 7000 block of Highway 16, the Sheriff's Office said in a news release.



While California voters legalized recreational marijuana use in 2016, local restrictions are in place on how many plants can be owned.

Deputies arrested Guangyang Bao, 60, of Sacramento, Jian Fang, 54, of Sacramento, Sinh Lieu, 52, of Sacramento, Bobby Lieu, 55, of Sacramento, and Paofu Chen, 34, of Queens, New York. They were booked into the Yolo County Jail.

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As in the Yolo County case, recent marijuana grow busts in Elk Grove and Roseville also involved suspects with New York connections.

Earlier this month, Elk Grove police announced they had seized 2,800 plants and more than 50 pounds of marijuana. Two of the men arrested were from Elk Grove, while the other three were from the East Coast, including two from New York City. A department spokesman said it was unusual to have suspects from so far out of town involved in a marijuana growing case.

Also this month, Roseville police and a Placer County law-enforcement task force announced they had seized more than \$1 million in marijuana in two homes. Three Roseville residents were arrested. Police said they intended to ship the marijuana to New York.

Sgt. Matt Davis, a spokesman for the Yolo County Sheriff's Office, said he could not comment on whether there are connections between the three cases, pending further investigation.



Recreational weed is now legal in California. So what does that mean?

In January 2018, state and local authorities will begin issuing licenses for the sale of legal recreational marijuana. But what do you need to know before you rush to the dispensary? Information courtesy of Ballotpedia.com.

Video produced by Emily Zentner/The Sacramento Bee

Brad Branan: 916-321-1065, @BradB_at_SacBee

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