

**JESUS RODRIGUEZ**  
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY



**OFFICE OF  
THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**  
**BONNIE M. DUMANIS**  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

San Diego  
330 West Broadway  
San Diego, CA 92101  
(619) 531-4040

<http://www.sandiegoda.com>

July 6, 2006  
**For Immediate**

Contact: DDA Damon Mosler  
(619) 531-3784

## **Illegal Medical Marijuana Dispensaries Raided in San Diego County, Owners Face Drug Charges**

San Diego County District Attorney Bonnie M. Dumanis and U.S. Attorney Carol Lam announced today that several illegal medical marijuana dispensaries were closed down while the business owners were arrested, after raids throughout the San Diego area.

Law enforcement agents and officers from the San Diego Police Department, San Diego Sheriff's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration and the multi-agency Narcotics Task Force served 13 state search warrants on marijuana dispensaries located in the city and county of San Diego. These warrants were served in conjunction with federal search warrants served by DEA for the cases being prosecuted by the US Attorney's office.

"Our office has no intention of stopping those who are chronically ill with AIDS, Glaucoma and cancer from obtaining any legally-prescribed drug, including medical marijuana, to help them ease their pain," DA Dumanis said. "Proposition 215 is being severely abused and it has led to the neighborhood pot dealer opening up storefronts from La Jolla to Ocean Beach to North Park."

The joint effort began in September 2005 after law enforcement received numerous complaints from nearby residents in the neighborhoods where these illegal drug dealers were disguised as so-called medical marijuana dispensaries.

The investigation covered two areas of concern. First was the proliferation of physician recommendations for the medical use of marijuana. Marijuana recommendations for six months or one year, which could be purchased from some specific doctors, appeared to be openly sold to anyone who had the cash for it. Law enforcement was encountering numerous apparently healthy individuals in their late teens or early 20's in possession of these recommendations.

Secondly, the investigation focused on the more than 20 store fronts that opened up throughout the city of San Diego that would then sell marijuana to anyone with a recommendation or a caregiver form signed by the same doctors.

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SDPD used undercover officers to talk to several doctors and obtain open-ended marijuana recommendations based upon self-reported, vague complaints of ailments. The forms purchased allowed the agents to buy marijuana many times and from many locations. The DA's Office has filed complaints with the Medical Board against several marijuana doctors.

Some of these stores not only sold marijuana, but also food products such as cookies and candy laced with marijuana. The candy is clearly marketed for young consumers. Some of the stores had promotions such a "Free Doobie Monday" and frequent buyer programs.

The DA's Office has filed charges including sale of marijuana (HS11360) and possession of marijuana for sale (HS11359). The charges carry maximum sentences of four years and three years in prison, respectively. Following is a list of dispensaries and the individuals (with dates of birth) charged in connection with each:

Ocean Beach Dispensary, 4230 Voltaire St. #2: Aaron Douglas Ballenger, (6/3/85), of Ocean Beach; Jason Kaufmann, (6/5/76) of San Diego; and William Burd, (2/25/77) of San Diego.

Native Sun Dispensary, 3806 Rosecrans St.: Stephen Alan Harding, (5/2/69) of San Diego; and Raphael Michael Mijares, (9/8/70) of Chula Vista.

THC Dispensary (No longer in business): Daniel Patrick Stansfield, (7/4/76) of Pacific Beach; and John Thomas Sullivan, (9/27/67) of La Jolla.

Utopia, 4843 #A Voltaire St.: Anthony Armine, (3/12/73) of Ocean Beach.

California Medical Center, 5544 La Jolla Blvd.: Ahmad Mustapha Abdul-Jaill, (8/28/84) of La Jolla; and Christopher Henry Jessie, (1/26/84) of La Jolla

The defendants arrested today are expected to be arraigned in San Diego Superior Court on Monday July 10, 2006 at 1:30 p.m. in Department 12, 220 West Broadway. Defendants who bail out of jail will get a return date for arraignment one week after their bail out date.

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