

U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration
Houston Division
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NEWS RELEASE

Search Warrants Lead to Multiple Arrests and Seizure of Thousands of Marijuana Plants

HOUSTON – A total of 24 people have been arrested and nearly 14,000 marijuana plants have been confiscated following enforcement actions conducted throughout the greater Houston area this week, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent in Charge Javier F. Peña announced today along with United States Attorney Kenneth Magidson.

On Tuesday, Aug. 21, sealed search warrants were executed on 60 properties located throughout Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties. A total of 40 of these properties were allegedly active hydroponic marijuana grow houses and contained marijuana plants in various stages of the growth. As a result of the searches, 24 individuals have now been arrested.

“Yesterday’s findings demonstrate the level of sophistication utilized by some organizations to conduct their alleged illegal activities,” said Peña. “The DEA and its law enforcement partners will continue to aggressively and proactively target all areas of drug trafficking. Operations of this nature pose serious safety concerns for the occupants of the residences as well as entire neighborhoods.”

The criminal complaint filed just moments ago charges the defendants with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance involving more than 1000 marijuana plants and conspiracy of maintaining a place for the purpose of manufacturing, distributing and using controlled substances. The complaint alleges that numerous houses located throughout Montgomery, Harris and Fort Bend Counties were utilized to grow marijuana. The searches resulted in the seizure of at least 100 and up to more than 850 marijuana plants in each of the 40 grow houses, totaling approximately 13,907 marijuana plants. Also seized during the course of the enforcement action on Tuesday was the equipment allegedly used to grow the marijuana as well as additional equipment from a suspected hydroponic store front and warehouse.

Prior to the enforcement action yesterday, 14 additional grow houses had also been searched previously in relation to this organization, during which additional marijuana plants were also seized. The total of plants during the course of the overall investigation totals approximately 19,000 plants.

Those taken into custody during the enforcement action yesterday were arrested at either their residence and/or one of the suspected locations of criminal activity. Those individuals and areas include: Thu Loan Dinh, 35, Hong Nhut Dang, 41, Anh Quang Nguyen, 52, Van Long Tran, 33, Tien Van Nguyen, 43, Minh Pham, 58, Truong Quang Lam, 37, Gioi The Nguyen, 55, Quy Ngoc Nguyen, 39, and Khac Hung Dinh, 45, Houston; Long Nguyen, 32, Long Do, 32, Tam Nguyen, 52, and Thang Van Doan, 35, Conroe, Texas; Timmy Dang, 37, Huu Trong Vu, 23, Ida Nga Pham, 33, Vinh Cong Le, 27, Hung Huy Nguyen, 48, Thiet Van Nguyen, 49, Trang Thi Kim Truong, 40, and Thi Ngo, 46, Spring, Texas; Yen Thi Do, 42, Richmond, Texas; and Tai Tan Nguyen, 29, Tomball, Texas.

All are expected to appear before U.S. Magistrate Judge Nancy K. Johnson momentarily, at which time the United States will request they remain in custody pending further criminal proceedings.

Also charged in relation to this case is Dinh Le, 47, of Houston. He is currently in state custody on related charges and is expected to be transferred to face these charges in the near future.

A conviction for conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute carries as possible punishment a term of no less than 10 years and up to life in federal prison as well as a \$10 million fine. If convicted of conspiracy to maintain a place of manufacturing, each defendant also faces up to 20 years in prison and a maximum \$500,000 fine.

The charges are the result of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force investigation dubbed Green House Effect, which included federal, state and local law enforcement agencies such as the DEA, sheriff's offices in Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties, Texas Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, police departments in Houston, Katy, Pearland, Willis, Conroe, Huntsville and Pasadena, Texas National Guard Joint Counter Drug Unit and Cypress Creek Emergency Medical Services.

A criminal complaint is an accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.