



Mortgage Fraud Leads to Racketeering and Marijuana Trafficking



For Immediate Release October 27, 2009

Detectives with the Highlands County Sheriff's Office and Agents of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's (FDLE) Sebring Field Office attempted to serve arrest warrants on 10 subjects for charges that include conspiracy to commit racketeering, conspiracy to traffic in cannabis, attempt to manufacture cannabis, mortgage fraud and grand theft. Of the ten, as of today 4 have been located and arrested. The investigation by FDLE and the Sheriff's Office began April 2008 and stemmed from the 2007 investigations of the marijuana grow houses that were discovered and dismantled in Highlands County. The targets of the investigation reside in the Miami area.

Highlands County law enforcement officials have continued to probe the many marijuana growing operations identified throughout the county over the past couple of years. These ongoing investigations resulted from a joint effort by the Highlands County Sheriff's Office and FDLE.

"Following the marijuana growing busts, we started looking backward to see how this many grow houses popped up all at once," said Sheriff Susan Benton. "What we discovered was that through the use of mortgage fraud, these criminals had a means to organize and conspire to commit racketeering and trafficking of marijuana".

This is the first tier of arrests with more arrests anticipated. Highlands Sheriff's Detectives and FDLE Agents from the Miami and Fort Myers Regional Operations Centers, which includes the Sebring Field Office, traveled to Miami and conducted an arrest operation of all targets. This particular case is being prosecuted by the Office of Statewide Prosecution in Orlando.

Suspects arrested today and booked into the Miami-Dade Detention Facility are listed below with charges and bonds:

NAME	AGE	ADDRESS	CHARGES	Bond \$
Lesman Chavarria	25	3520 NW 79th Street, Lot F-614 Miami, FL 33147	Ct 1: Consp to Commit RICO Ct 2: Consp to Trf in Cannabis	\$50,000 \$50,000
Yeleines Viera	26	5101 Collins Ave #3L Miami Beach, FL 33140 1155 West 77th Street #118W Hialeah, FL 33010	Ct 1: Consp to Commit RICO Ct 2: Consp to Trf in Cannabis	\$50,000 \$50,000
Maria Lurbe	46	13210 SW 17th Lane Apt 3 Miami, FL 33175	Ct 1: Consp to Commit RICO Ct 2: Consp to Trf in Cannabis	\$50,000 \$50,000
Alexander Yanes	27	230 SW 136th Place Miami, FL 33184	Ct 1: Consp to Commit RICO Ct 2: Consp to Trf in Cannabis Ct 3: Attempt to Manuf Cannabis	\$50,000 \$50,000 \$50,000

This joint investigation is in the early stages and we look forward to many additional suspects and charges of mortgage fraud.

For Further Information Contact:

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