



U.S. Department of Justice

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MARIJUANA GROWS IN SOUTHERN UTAH **FACT SHEET**

- **The 2010 Utah outdoor marijuana growing season resulted in the seizure of 106,573 marijuana plants seized from 17 grow operations, an increase of 27 percent from 2009, according to DEA statistics. Individuals are exploiting Utah's vast public lands, scarce water sources, and the remote nature of Utah's back country.**
- **24 arrests were made during the 2010 growing season, a 140 percent increase from 2009, which produced 10 arrests, according to the DEA. Marijuana worth more than \$215 million was taken from these operations, along with several firearms.**

- **U.S. Forest Service statistics show 183,588 plants were removed from 26 sites in Utah (statewide) from Oct. 1, 2009 to Nov. 17, 2010. Garfield County had 5 sites with 25,194 plants; Iron County had 2 sites with 132,000 plants; Sanpete County had 1 site with 25,375 plants; Utah County had 1 site with 7 plants; Davis County had 1 site with 12,500 plants; Wasatch County had 8 plants on 1 site; Washington County had 11 sites with 44,329 plants; and Wayne County had 4 sites with 62,975 plants.**
- **Partner agencies participating in the law enforcement operation included the DEA, the Utah Department of Public Safety, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, ICE, the Washington County Drug Task Force, the St. George Police Department, the Washington County Sheriff's Office, the Iron County Sheriff's Office, the Beaver County Sheriff's Office, the Kane County Sheriff's Office, the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, the Central Utah Narcotics Task Force, the Garfield County Sheriff's Office, the Iron-Garfield Counties Task Force, and the Utah National Guard. Several local police departments participate as members of task forces.**

Examples of cases

U.S. v Mendoza-Mendoza, et al

Romaldo Mendoza-Mendoza

Age: 42

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: unknown

Juan Pablo Solorio-Mendoza

Age: 26

Citizenship: U.S. citizen

Residence: unknown

Adrean Montalvo-Castelan
Age: 31
Citizenship: U.S. citizen
Residence: unknown

Carmen Mendoza-Martinez
Age: 56
Citizenship: Mexican national
Residence: unknown

Salvador Ramirez
Age: 24
Citizenship: U.S. citizen
Residence: unknown

Miguel Angel Chavez
Age: 29
Citizenship: U.S. citizen
Residence: unknown

Henry Macias Medina
Age: 29
Citizenship: U.S. citizen
Residence: unknown

In late August 2009, a law enforcement agent received information from a deer hunter who followed a trail to a suspected marijuana grow in the Dixie National Forest, approximately 15 miles northeast of St. George. The concerned hunter said it was unusual for him to see heavy foot traffic in this remote area. At some point, the concerned citizen located an empty fertilizer bag and observed what he believed was between 30-50 marijuana plants. He also observed black plastic water lines he described as a drip irrigation system. The citizen marked his location with his GPS and left the area. Law enforcement officers from the U.S. Forest Service later hiked to the grow location. In September 2009, seven individuals were arrested and several firearms seized, including two assault rifles. More than 1,000 plants were involved in this case.

Ramirez, Medina, and Chavez pleaded guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation; conspiracy to manufacture a controlled substance

by cultivation; and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense in November 2010. They were each sentenced in February 2011 to 180 months in federal prison.

Montalvo-Castelan and Solorio-Mendoza both pleaded guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense in February and March of 2010. Montalvo-Castelan was sentenced to 90 months in federal prison in December 2010 and Solorio-Mendoza was sentenced to 75 months.

Mendoza-Martinez, who pleaded guilty to one count of manufacturing a controlled substance, was sentenced in December 2010 to 24 months in federal prison.

Mendoza-Mendoza, who pleaded guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance, illegal alien in possession of a firearm, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense, was sentenced to 90 months in prison in December 2010.

U.S. v. Gomez-Talavara, et al

Rito Gomez-Talavara

Age: 31

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Alberto Gomez-Talavara

Age: 23

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Both individuals sentenced to 120 months in federal prison in March 2011 after pleading guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation and possessing a firearm while in the country illegally. As a part of a plea agreement reached with federal prosecutors, they admitted they assisted in the manufacturing of marijuana on land in Washington County. According

to the plea agreement, officers counted approximately 3,900 marijuana plants in the cultivation site. Both also admitted to possessing a Winchester 12 gauge shotgun. At the time they possessed the firearm, they were unlawfully present in the United States.

U.S. v Lopez-Hernandez, et al

Jose Arturo Lopez-Hernandez
Age: 23
Citizenship: Mexican national
Residence: Bakersfield, CA

David Flores
Age: 19
Citizenship: U.S. Citizen
Residence: Paris, CA

David Flores was sentenced to 46 months in federal prison in January 2011 and Lopez-Hernandez was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison in February 2011. According to the plea agreements, the pair admitted to assisting in manufacturing a controlled substance in Washington County on July 31, 2010. Officers counted 4,060 marijuana plants – a total the defendants did not dispute.

U.S. v Arrellano-Angulo, et al

Emeliano Arrellano-Angulo
Age: 29
Citizenship: Mexican national
Residence: San Francisco, CA

Jesus Sepulveda-Ruiz
Age: 51
Citizenship: Mexican National

Residence: Pamona, CA

Eleno Torres-Angulo

Age: 45

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Los Angeles, CA

These three defendants were sentenced to 18 months in federal prison in March 2011 after pleading guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance. The three were charged in connection with a marijuana grow in Garfield County. Officers later counted approximately 413 plants at the cultivation site, a figure the defendants did not dispute. According to a complaint filed in the case, the grow came to the attention of law enforcement when a concern citizen reported a tip to the Garfield County Sheriff's Office. The Iron-Garfield Narcotics Task Force investigated the case along with ICE and DEA.

U.S. v Martinez-Garcia

Sergio Martinez-Garcia

Age: 24

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Cedar City, UT

The defendant was sentenced to 46 months in federal prison in January 2011 after pleading guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation in October 2010. According to a plea agreement in the case, Martinez-Garcia admitted he helped manufacture the plants in Washington County. Officers later counted approximately 4,500 marijuana plants at the cultivation site. A BLM agent discovered the marijuana grow and officers set up surveillance of the area. On July 20, 2010, officers observed a vehicle approaching the site and initiated a traffic stop. Martinez-Garcia was arrested at that time.

U.S. v Roman-Duran

Francisco Roman-Duran

Age: 37

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Rosario Mendoza-Rodriguez

Age: 33

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Baker City, OR

Roman-Duran is serving 46 months in federal prison and Mendoza-Rodriguez is serving 57 months after pleading guilty last fall to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation. The two were involved in a marijuana grow in Wayne County located by local citizens and reported to the Wayne County Sheriff's Office. According to the plea agreement, approximately 8,787 plants were found at the cultivation site in the Dixie National Forest.

U.S. v Zacapala-Diaz

Felix Zacapala-Diaz

Age: 23

Citizenship: Mexican

Residence: Los Angeles, CA

This defendant is serving a 10-year federal prison sentence imposed in March 2010 after pleading guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation. He admitted, as a part of a plea agreement reached with federal prosecutors, that he manufactured a controlled substance, specifically

marijuana, on a grow site in Wayne County in August 2009. DEA officers apprehended him near the cultivation site on Boulder Mountain. Some 20,238 plants were seized at the site.

U.S. v Granados-Dominguez, et al

Jose Granados-Dominguez

Age: 44

Citizenship: Mexican

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Ceferino Granados-Arriola

Age: 20

Citizenship: Mexican

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Both defendants pleaded guilty to one count of manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation last spring and were sentenced in August 2010. Granados-Dominguez is serving 24 months and Granados-Arriola was sentenced to 12 months. The grow came to law enforcement's attention when the DEA received information from a person hiking in Washington County came across what he believed was a cultivation site. The DEA and the Washington County Drug Task Force conducted surveillance operations of the area. A few days later, the two defendants in the case found at the site and arrested. Officer seized about 430 marijuana plants. Granados-Arriola told officers that his relative, Jose Granados-Dominguez , hired him about a week before their arrests to water the plants for \$100 a day. According to a complaint filed in the case, at the time of Jose Granados-Dominguez arrest in Utah, there was an outstanding arrest warrant issued by the Justice Court in Las Vegas Township, Clark County, Nevada, for the murder of two people in Las Vegas.

U.S. v Galvez-Reyes, et al

Juan Carlos Galvez-Reyes

Age: 22

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: San Diego, CA

Israel Galvez-Cota

Age: 22

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: San Diego, CA

Miguel Angel Galvez-Reyes

Age: 23

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: San Diego, CA

Jesus Cabrena-Sotelo

Age: 19

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: San Diego, CA

Jose Jorge Garcia-Figueroa

Age: 31

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: San Jasito, CA

Nica Reyez-Rodriguez

Age: 50

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: San Diego, CA

In June 2010, law enforcement officers located a marijuana a grow site in a canyon north of Pine Valley in Washington County. Officers conducted surveillance of the site and later entered the grow site and encountered

numerous individuals who fled when confronted. Five were caught and arrested. A sixth individual was arrested a day later. Jesus Cabrena-Sotelo, Jose Jorge Garcia-Figueroa, Nica Reyez-Rodriquez and Juan Carlos and Miguel Angel Galvez-Reyes were each sentenced to 51 months in federal prison. Galvez-Cota is serving 42-months. Each of the defendants pleaded guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation. More than 8,000 plants were counted by officers at the grow site.

U.S. v Vazquez-Delgado

David Vazquez-Delgado

Age: 19

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Not Known

Vazquez-Delgado was sentenced to 51 months in federal prison in March 2011 after pleading guilty to manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation. More than 7,000 plants were discovered at the grow site in the Hicks Creek area south of Cedar City in Iron County. The Iron-Garfield Counties Narcotics Task Force received a tip from a local citizen about the grow.

A helicopter surveillance organized by federal law enforcement officers confirmed the grow. The grow area was divided into multiple plots among junipers and cedars. The area surrounding the grow was covered with thick scrub oak and other vegetation.

Vazquez-Delgado was arrested after a surveillance of the grow location. He admitted that a man in California hired him to work and drove him to Utah. They arrived at their destination after dark and the man directed him to hike up a trail. He said that the next day, he started trimming marijuana plants.

U.S. v Gomez-Talavera

Francisco Gomez-Talavera

Age: 27

Citizenship: Mexican national

Residence: Las Vegas, NV

Sentencing is set for April 4, 2011, in this case. Gomez-Talavera pleaded guilty in January to one count of manufacturing a controlled substance by cultivation. According to a plea agreement in the case, Gomez-Talavera admitted that in August 2010, he assisted in manufacturing marijuana in a Washington County grow. Law enforcement officers apprehended him after he dropped off supplies near the cultivation site. Officers later counted approximately 10,715 marijuana plants in the cultivation site – a result Gomez-Talavera has not disputed. Gomez-Talavera currently faces a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence.

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