

## DEA Raids 11 Pot Clubs (LADN)

[Los Angeles Daily News](#), January 19, 2007

The Drug Enforcement Administration raided 11 medical marijuana dispensaries across Los Angeles on Wednesday, including five in the San Fernando Valley.

The raids came a day after Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton denounced the storefront medicinal clinics as crime magnets that have begun to prey on teenagers - including passing out fliers at Grant High School in Van Nuys this past summer - and called for a moratorium on the facilities.

"(These) enforcement operations send a message to these drug traffickers," said Sarah Pullen, a DEA special agent. "The DEA will continue to conduct these enforcement operations and keep our community safe by enforcing federal drug laws."

Under a 1996 state ballot measure, the clinics can distribute doctor-prescribed marijuana to relieve anything from anxiety to nausea to acute pain. But federal officials consider all marijuana use illegal.

**The number of clinics has exploded from five in 2005 to 143 by the end of last year. Bratton said many of the clinics are lucrative operations aimed at recreational users.**

Bratton and Councilman Dennis Zine have backed rules banning dispensaries within 1,000 feet of any school, day-care facility, church or other house of worship.

While several medical marijuana activists support some regulation, they say the federal raids unfairly harm patients.

"It's disgusting in this day and age, when cities and counties are moving to regulate medical marijuana, that the federal government would still be busting people," said Don Duncan, Southern California coordinator for the Americans for Safe Access, a national medical marijuana advocacy group.

**This week, the Los Angeles Police Commission released a report that found about half of all the city's marijuana clubs were in the Valley. The report found increased robberies and aggravated assaults around clubs near Van Nuys and more citizen complaints.**

## DEA Raids Medical Marijuana Centers (WT)

[The Washington Times](#), January 19, 2007

Federal agents in California and Washington state have raided several medical marijuana distribution centers, seizing thousands of pounds of the drug, marijuana-laced edibles, weapons and cash. There were no arrests.

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent in Charge Ralph W. Partridge, who heads the agency's Los Angeles field office, said his agents served 11 federal search warrants yesterday at marijuana distribution centers located throughout Los Angeles County, including five

locations in West Hollywood, four in the San Fernando Valley, as well as locations in Hollywood and Venice.

"Today's enforcement operations show that these establishments are nothing more than drug-trafficking organizations bringing criminal activities to our neighborhoods and drugs near our children and schools," Mr. Partridge said.

He described the investigation as ongoing, adding that "leads are being actively pursued and developed."

In California, according to the DEA, there is no state regulation or standard of the cultivation or distribution of medical marijuana. The state leaves the establishment of any guidelines to local jurisdictions, which can vary widely.

**The DEA and its local and state counterparts routinely have said that large-scale drug traffickers hide behind and invoke California's Proposition 215, even when there is no evidence of any medical claim. Prop. 215 created an exemption from criminal penalties for medical use of marijuana. But it does not legalize marijuana; it only changes how medical patients and their "primary caregivers" will be treated by the state's court system.**

**The DEA said high-level traffickers often pose as caregivers and are able to sell illegal drugs with impunity.**

Drug-enforcement agents also raided the Everett, Wash., headquarters of an advocacy group for medical marijuana patients, confiscating what police documents said were more than 1,000 marijuana plants and computers whose owners said contain personal information on 200 people authorized to use the drug for medicinal purposes.

Detective Roy Alloway, assigned to the federally funded West Sound Narcotics Enforcement Team, discounted assertions by spokesmen for the group that the center was designed as a source for medicinal marijuana only. He told the Associated Press the site was a drug-dealing enterprise, adding that it was "absurd" to think that the number of plants there would be covered by a medicinal marijuana medical authorization.

Washington law allows possession of marijuana in doctor-approved cases but makes no provision for obtaining it.

## **Agents Raid Medical Marijuana Advocacy Office (SEAPI)**

[Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), January 19, 2007

Drug enforcement agents raided the Everett headquarters of an advocacy group for medical marijuana patients, confiscating what police documents say was more than 1,000 plants and computers that the owners say contain personal information of about 200 men and women authorized to use the drug for medicinal purposes.

So far, no one has been arrested or charged with a crime.

Fearful of potential repercussions and unsure of the officers' ultimate aim, patients in the

CannaCare network of marijuana users have been "laying low," said one, terrified that they may be prosecuted for using a substance authorized by their physicians.

"Who knows what they're doing with our information?" said Steve Newman, who has multiple sclerosis and has been associated with CannaCare for two years. "It makes me concerned -- really, really concerned. But we're pretty helpless. Nobody can say much about it."

A detective assigned to the federally funded West Sound Narcotics Enforcement Team, which launched Friday's raid, scoffed at the notion that CannaCare -- run out of the home of medical marijuana advocate Steve Sarich -- was anything other than a drug-dealing enterprise.

Detective Roy Alloway said it was "absurd" to think that the number of plants Sarich was tending would be covered by his medical authorization.

"It's clear that Sarich is a guy that's selling drugs," said Alloway, who noted that state law allows no more than a 60-day supply of marijuana for medical use.

The amount found in Sarich's home, he said, was "not even close."

Long a thorn in the side of law enforcement for his vocal, thumb-in-the-eye advocacy style, Sarich, 56, insists that the government is merely harassing patients -- himself included -- who have a legitimate right to use the drug for managing pain due to multiple sclerosis, cancer and a host of other illnesses.

Washington voters approved the use of marijuana for certain medical conditions through a citizens initiative in 1998.

"Since they don't like medical marijuana, this is an attack on the people that support it," said Sarich, who insists he's no drug dealer. The nominal sums CannaCare collects go into supporting medical marijuana users, he said.

Only a few ounces of pot were found in the raid, and Sarich said the bulk of the seized crop was unrooted cuttings and starter plants. He also said the \$1,020 drug agents seized in the raid was for his \$1,103.56 Snohomish County PUD bill.

The raid's ultimate end remains unclear. Alloway said he referred the information to federal authorities because of the pot-growing operation's size.

Jeff Eig, spokesman for the Seattle division of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, declined to comment.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times reported on its Web site that the DEA said federal agents had raided 11 medical marijuana outlets in Los Angeles on Wednesday and seized several thousand pounds of marijuana, along with weapons and money.

Washington law allows possession of marijuana in doctor-approved cases but makes no provision for obtaining it, forcing patients who cannot grow enough to buy from others -- sometimes resorting to patronizing street-corner dealers.

Sarich, however, has flouted the statute by announcing that CannaCare will provide pot plants to patients. He and an associate, John Worthington, whose Renton home was also raided last week, said the police action was politically motivated retaliation.

Sarich also believes that because the state has no list of registered medical marijuana patients, CannaCare was targeted because it has contact information for more than 1,200 users.

That incursion into patient privacy worries advocates at the American Civil Liberties Union at least as much as the bust itself.

Alison Chin Holcomb, director of the Washington ACLU's Marijuana Education Project, said Sarich might have forced the government into it.

"He certainly wasn't afraid of getting the attention of law enforcement," she said. "He put himself out there on the radar."

Worthington recently sent documents alleging drug-enforcement excesses by Alloway to the state House and Senate judiciary and health care committees. He sent another letter to the State Patrol, accusing the detective of tampering with evidence.

"They went after me because I'm an activist, and I've been terrorized out of growing," said Worthington, whose home contained six marijuana plants, according to a Kitsap County Sheriff's Office document. "I can't have my kids frisked like they're criminals. That was disgusting. I'm not Al Capone -- I'm a dad."

Alloway, who works for the Bremerton Police Department, denied the allegations of wrongdoing on Wednesday.

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