



# **Fresno County Sheriff's Office**

Margaret Mims, Sheriff-Coroner

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## **News Release**

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## **Fresno HEAT Uncovers Chop Shop; Arrest Three Men**

Members of the Fresno HEAT (Help Eliminate Auto Theft) Task Force have booked three men into the Fresno County Jail. Jermaine Fuller, 33, of Fresno is facing felony charges of vehicle theft, operating a chop shop and probation violation. Thomas Roland II, 41, of Fresno is facing felony charges of vehicle theft and operating a chop shop. Thomas Roland III, 24, of Fresno is facing felony charges of vehicle theft and operating a chop shop. Both of the Rolands, who are father and son, have since posted bond and bailed out of jail.

On January 15<sup>th</sup>, HEAT detectives uncovered a chop shop operation at a home on the 1200 block of W. Rose Ave., northeast of Caruthers. Detectives became aware of this location during a recent investigation into a 1968 Chevrolet Chevelle, which was taken during a burglary in Fresno. Detectives learned that an auto repair business was taking place at the home on Rose Ave., but it was being run without a valid business license. Detectives visited the home to complete a business inspection and found numerous illegal activities.

Detectives found dozens of vehicles on the property, many of which were in the process of being stripped. There were also several engines, transmissions and other parts, which were removed from stolen vehicles. In recent months, Fresno HEAT has found numerous stolen cars abandoned in fields and major parts were missing. Detectives have determined that this house is where many of those vehicles had been stripped prior to being dumped. One of the most significant recoveries was a 1968 Mercury Cougar. It was reportedly stolen in Oakland back in 1991. Also, detectives found parts of the 1968 Chevelle that initially launched the investigation.

**Detectives also found close to a dozen marijuana plants growing inside one room of the house. This is illegal under all circumstances because Fresno County enforces a strict ban on all cannabis cultivation, both indoors and outdoors. Violation of the ordinance could result in several consequences:**

- 1. Growers can be arrested on a felony charge.**
- 2. Growers can face heavy fines starting at \$1,000 per plant.**
- 3. Property owners, including family members, can be fined too.**
- 4. Very short timelines to appeal citations and fines.**
- 5. Prop. 215/SB 420 compliance will not stop enforcement.**
- 6. Additional fines, interest, legal fees and costs of abatement can be charged.**
- 7. County can place lien on property for unpaid fines.**

**All of the suspects in this case have been arrested on chop shop charges in the past. In fact, Roland II was caught operating a chop shop at this same Rose Ave. address in 2007.**

**Anyone with additional information on any of the suspects in this case is asked to please contact the Sheriff's Office at (559) 600-3111 or call Crime Stoppers at (559) 498-STOP (7867). You will remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward.**

**\*\*\*HEAT is comprised of members from the California Highway Patrol, Fresno County Sheriff's Office (FCSO), the National Insurance Crime Bureau and Clovis Police Department.**

