



Fresno County Sheriff – Coroner's Office

Margaret Mims, Sheriff-Coroner

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News Release

Tony Botti – Public Information Officer
Office: (559) 600-8137
Cell: (559) 977-0379
E-Mail: tony.botti@fresnosheriff.org

Pot Plants and Guns Seized from Supposed Medical Marijuana User in Squaw Valley

On Tuesday, August 30th, the Fresno County Sheriff's Narcotics Enforcement Team and members of the California Army National Guard served search warrants at four different locations in Squaw Valley. Two of the properties were along the 47000 block of Creekside Road, one was on the 50000 block of Mound Lane and the other was on the 50000 block of Bramble Lane.

A total of 442 marijuana plants were seized, along with 11 guns. Detectives arrested five people, four of whom were booked into the Fresno County Jail on various felony charges.

- **Arnulfo Topete, 63, of Squaw Valley** faces charges for cultivation of marijuana, possession of marijuana with the intent to sell it, possession of assault weapons and concealing stolen property.
- **Gabriel Topete, 32, of Squaw Valley** faces charges for possession of assault weapons and concealing stolen property.
- **Lonnie Crawford, 32, of Squaw Valley** faces charges for cultivation of marijuana and possession of marijuana with the intent to sell it.
- **Toum Chanthavongsa, 58, of Squaw Valley** faces charges for cultivation of marijuana and possession of marijuana with the intent to sell it.
- **Emiliano Aparicio, 49, of Squaw Valley** was cited on charges of cultivation of marijuana and possession of marijuana with the intent to sell it.

Something worth noting is that in the last four months, detectives have seized marijuana plants from three different properties in Squaw Valley owned by **Arnulfo Topete**. On May 10, 2016, detectives seized 1,277 marijuana plants on his land located on the 49000 block of Chuckwagon Road. On August 11, 2016, they seized 1,228 plants from his home on the 47000 block of Creekside Road. On Tuesday, at Topete's other home on the 47000 block of Creekside Road, detectives seized 54 marijuana plants and 2 ½ lbs. of processed marijuana.

Topete is unemployed and has a California Medical Marijuana Recommendation Card. According to SB 420 and Prop 215 guidelines, California medical marijuana patients may have up to 6 mature or 12 immature plants and up to a ½ lb. of processed marijuana. However, all of this remains illegal in Fresno County.

Detectives also found Topete to be in possession of nine guns, two of which were reported stolen. The guns included pistols, a shotgun, an AK-47 assault rifle and another assault rifle which does not meet the standards of being compliant in California. Arnulfo's son, Gabriel, was also arrested for being in possession of some of these guns.

So far in 2016, the Fresno County Sheriff's Narcotics Enforcement Team has eradicated **101** different grow sites, seized **83,000** marijuana plants, **225** lbs. of processed marijuana, **42** guns and arrested **47** people.

Fresno County enforces a strict ban on all cannabis cultivation, both indoors and outdoors. This ban also applies to those holding medical recommendation cards. 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. Prop. 215/SB 420 compliance will not stop enforcement.
5. Additional fines, interest, legal fees and costs of abatement can be charged.
6. County can place lien on property for unpaid fines.

The Sheriff's Office takes all tips seriously and encourages the public to report suspected marijuana grow sites. If you are aware of any type of illegal drug activity, report it anonymously by calling the Narcotics Hotline at 1-800-660-1086 or Email: drugtip@fresnosheriff.org