



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**DA'S OFFICE CHARGES THREE MEN WHO OPERATED ILLEGAL CANNABIS DISPENSARIES
UNDER THE NAME 'THE VAULT CHURCH' AND 'THE VAULT'**

RIVERSIDE – Three Corona men have been charged by the Riverside County DA's Office in connection with illegal cannabis dispensaries which operated under the name "The Vault Church" or "The Vault".

One of the men, Jose Serrano, DOB: 6-28-93, was arraigned today, April 18, 2019. He entered not guilty pleas to all counts and now has a felony settlement conference and bail review hearing scheduled for April 25.

Arrest warrants have been issued for Serrano's brother, Stephen Serrano, DOB: 11-7-95, and for Cesar Ramirez, DOB: 9-2-79. All three were charged by the DA's Office on April 16, 2019, in a 28-count criminal complaint.

The men have each been charged in case RIF1901644 with 12 felonies and 16 misdemeanors. The counts include conspiracy to commit the crime of possession of cannabis for sale, maintaining a location for the purpose of selling a controlled substance, money laundering, failure to file sales/use tax, and selling cannabis without a permit.

In August 2018, a district attorney investigator assigned to the DA's countywide Cannabis Regulation Task Force began an investigation into three illegally operating dispensaries at 5024 Etiwanda Ave. in Mira Loma, 5298 Mission Blvd. in Jurupa Valley, and 291 N. Yale St. in Hemet. Cannabis dispensaries were not permitted in those areas.

During the investigation, undercover purchases were made at all three locations. In September 2018, search warrants were served at the three illegal dispensaries and large amounts of finished cannabis product and cash were seized by authorities. Hundreds of marijuana plants in various stages of maturity were found and seized at the location in Mira Loma.

The illegal operation continued even after the September warrants were served with another illegal dispensary opening in Corona as "Corona Holy Crossing" and the reopening of the Mira Loma location. Those have also been shut down by the task force.

None of the locations was licensed to sell cannabis by the state Bureau of Cannabis Control or had a seller's permit issued by the state Department of Tax and Fee Administration to collect sales tax for retail cannabis sales.

The purpose of the Cannabis Regulation Task Force, which is operated by the DA's Office, is to protect properly licensed legal cannabis businesses and enforce regulatory requirements which protect the environment and consumers. The aim of the task force is not to shut down legally operating facilities, but rather to ensure fair business practices and keep criminal activity out of the legal cannabis industry and out of our communities. When dispensaries operate without following the law or regulations, their unfair business practices impact those dispensaries which are obeying the law. Illegal or unlicensed dispensaries also may be providing customers with untested and potentially harmful products.

Agencies currently on the task force include the DA's Bureau of Investigation, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Hemet Police Department, the Riverside Police Department, and the Temecula Police Department.

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