



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 3, 2011

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
HERBERT HADAD, ELLEN DAVIS,
CARLY SULLIVAN, JERIKA
RICHARDSON, EDELI RIVERA
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(914) 993-1900 (212) 637-2600

DEA

ERIN MCKENZIE-MULVEY
(212) 337-2906

ICE

LORIE DANKERS
(206) 793-8755

**TWO MEN CHARGED IN WHITE PLAINS FEDERAL COURT
WITH OPERATING A MARIJUANA GROW HOUSE**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), and JAMES T. HAYES, JR., the Special Agent in Charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations ("ICE -HSI"), announced the arrest yesterday of LAWRENCE C. HERZ and MICHAEL J. SZTROPKALYI for operating a marijuana grow house.

U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated, "These alleged drug producers and distributors might have seemed ingenious, operating a 'grow house' with some 150 marijuana plants in an obscure, rural area. Fortunately, federal law enforcement officers and their local counterparts were smarter. I commend the cooperative efforts that shut down this operation and brought its alleged perpetrators to justice."

DEA Special Agent in Charge JOHN P. GILBRIDE stated, "From locations in the inner city to locations in rural areas, marijuana distributors are capitalizing on illegal production and sales for one reason and one reason only - to make a profit. There is no forethought of the dangers of drug abuse or the dangers of operating a marijuana grow operation - like fire risks and pollution - in a residential environment, but it is law enforcement's commitment to keeping our neighborhoods safe that

led us to identify and arrest those responsible for this illegal operation."

ICE HSI Special Agent in Charge JAMES T. HAYES, JR. stated, "The action against this marijuana operation will not only help keep drugs off the street, it will help ensure that the profits from the sale of those drugs aren't used to support future criminal activity. ICE HSI and our law enforcement partners remain committed to ensuring the offenders are brought to justice."

According to a Complaint filed in White Plains federal court, on March 2, 2011, law enforcement officers executed a search warrant at a house located in Smallwood, New York, where law enforcement officers believed HERZ and SZTROPKALYI were operating a marijuana grow house. Among other things, law enforcement officers recovered from the house, approximately 150 marijuana plants, lights, a humidifier, pots, soil, and other materials used in marijuana grow houses.

* * *

SZTROPKALYI and HERZ were presented in White Plains federal court before U.S. Magistrate Judge GEORGE A. YANTHIS late yesterday afternoon. Both defendants were detained without bail. If convicted, each defendant faces a mandatory minimum of 5 years in prison and a maximum of 40 years' imprisonment.

Mr. BHARARA praised the efforts of the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force, which is comprised of agents and officers of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York City Police Department, the United States Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New York State Police the United States Marshal Service and the United States Attorney's Office. The Strike Force is partially funded by the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), which is a federally funded crime fighting initiative. He also thanked the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office for its role in the investigation.

This case is being handled by the White Plains Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney KATHRYN MARTIN is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.