

WASHINGTON STATE PATROL

CANNABIS ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TEAM - OVERVIEW

House Regulated Substances & Gaming Committee –
September 17, 2024



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CANNABIS ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TEAM

Received funding in 2018 to establish a team of detectives focused on investigating the illegal production, distribution, and diversion of cannabis from the legal market.

Cannabis Enforcement Response Team (CERT) was created.

OUR MISSION is to eradicate illegal cannabis drug trafficking organizations.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



WHAT WE DO

- Conduct investigations
- Receive complaint and/or intelligence from varying sources
- Conduct surveillance/gather intelligence
- Identify drug trafficking organizations (DTO) properties, locations, and involved persons and vehicles
- Organize resources for search warrant operations
- Serve search warrants, collect evidence, and refer charges

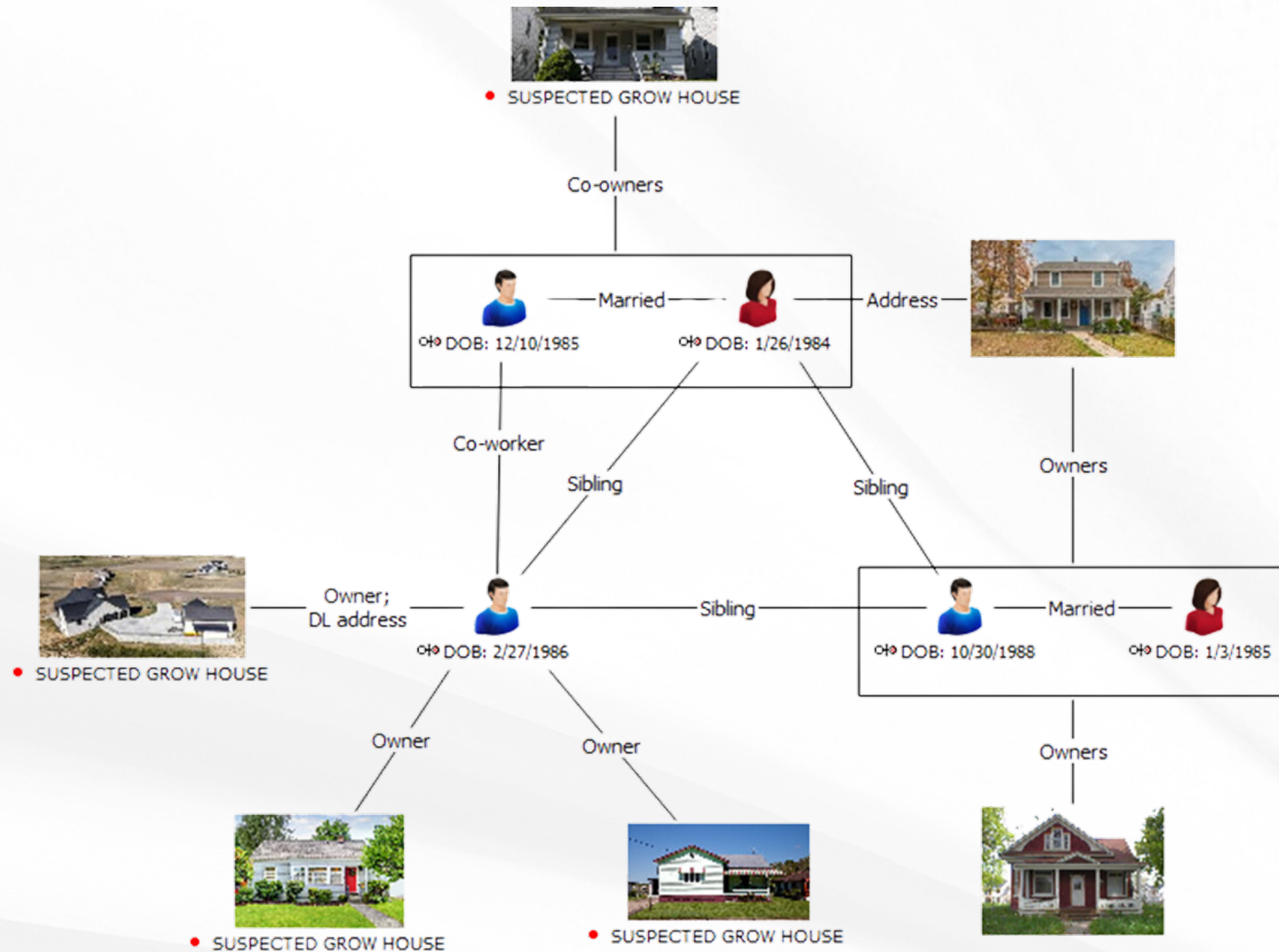


INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

- Odor confirmation
- Power records
- Identify residential owner
- Vehicles involved
 - Use of GPS trackers
 - Use of pole cameras
- Potential employment/income information
- Deconfliction with LCB to confirm unlicensed
- Other associated locations



HOW ARE WE SUPPORTED



Information is provided to Intelligence Analysts

Represent and comprehend relationships among individuals, properties, vehicles, and businesses

Identify key nodes to target to disrupt/dismantle illegal activities

Decipher organizational hierarchies

Uncover patterns

Dynamically update network picture as investigation's progress

SEARCH WARRANT OPERATIONS

- Often involves multiples locations
- Pattern of life intelligence is utilized to guide when to serve warrants
- Multi-agency operations and require significant resources and logistics
- Growers (aka tenders) have very little information about who runs or controls the grow
- Chinese and Spanish interpreters are often used to interview suspects





Transition from
outdoor to indoor
growing

Seasonally
weather
dependent versus
indoor & year-
round operations

Year-round
growing
skyrockets profits

INDOOR GROW REVENUE/OUTPUTS

Average indoor grow houses:

- 1,000 plants

One average plant will produce:

- 1/3 pound of bud

One pound of black-market wholesale bud sees:

- \$4,000 (street value: 3-4 times wholesale)

Most growers run 3-4 stages

One average grow house will produce:

- 350 pounds each month

Wholesale Revenue:
\$1.4M per single
house/month

Grower Earnings:
\$350,000

Street Value:
\$4.2M

OUR IMPACT ON ILLICIT CANNABIS

Cumulative CERT Stats: FY19-FY24

Federal FY	Total Grows	Private	Public	Indoor	Outdoor	Plants	Processed (LBS)	Package	Weapons Seized	Arrests	Assets Seized
FY 19	103	96	7	64	32	102,432	5,336	0	72	89	\$3,100,320
FY 20	108	105	3	49	59	87,674	3,365	50	113	105	\$2,750,237
FY 21	46	43	3	34	9	47,856	3,976	0	11	82	\$10,908,299
FY 22	22	22	0	13	9	18,134	1,621	0	31	37	\$171,457
FY 23	100	31	0	81	19	21,167	2,313	0	10	30	\$60,023
FY 24*	43	9	0	27	16	1,123	3,226	3	0	11	\$59,500
TOTAL:	422	306	13	268	144	288,216	19,837	53	237	354	\$17,049,836

*10/1/2023 – 8/31/2024

ENFORCEMENT INHIBITORS

Dangers associated with enforcement:

- Electrical hazards
- Chemical hazards
- Structural integrity
- Closed-air environment
- Mold exposure

Relationships established with DOE, PUD, HUD,
and many others



ENFORCEMENT INHIBITORS

The background image shows several individuals in white hazmat suits and respirators working in a room filled with cannabis plants. One person in the foreground is holding a camera, likely documenting the scene. The plants are in various stages of growth, some in white grow bags. The lighting is dim, with some overhead lights visible.

Search warrant operations are considered a SWAT and lab response

Increased site safety training to CERT/SWAT personnel

DOE and EPA partner to stay informed, report unknown chemicals, & ensure personnel safety during illicit cannabis investigations

Eradication of plants not always feasible

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- More narrowly focused on finances
 - Currently training an analyst in the field of forensic accounting
- More in-depth investigations to trace illicit funds back to a DTO leader
 - Plant eradication remains a function
 - Criminality behind cannabis manufacturing/production is highly complex
- Innovating how CERT eradicates to minimize hazard exposures without sacrificing dismantlement and disruption to these criminal organizations



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Black market weed tied to Chinese criminal networks seized in Maine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CFT2yBLvwM>

Maine now a hot spot for marijuana growing by Chinese criminal groups, official say

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goxB_xKRQhQ

DEA: Chinese organized crime laundering money for Mexican drug cartels

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvuAE0Owoio>





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