

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

MARIJUANA GROW NEAR PUBLIC SCHOOL YIELDS 78-MONTH FEDERAL SENTENCE FOR NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY MAN

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - February 27, 2009

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced today that Shaun Michael Fitch, of San Marcos, California, was sentenced to serve 78 months in federal prison by the Honorable Barry Ted Moskowitz, after Fitch's guilty plea to two counts – (1) conspiracy to manufacture approximately 246 marijuana plants, within 1,000 feet of a public elementary school, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 846, 841(a)(1), and 860, and (2) money laundering, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1957. Following his custodial sentence, Shaun Fitch was ordered to serve eight years of supervised release.

As part of his plea, Shaun Fitch admitted that he grew marijuana from May 2006 to May 9, 2008, at his residence in San Marcos, California. Fitch also admitted that he engaged in money laundering when he purchased the residence for \$431,987 by submitting false information in his loan application. He further admitted to growing marijuana at his second residence in San Marcos.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri Walker Hobson, who prosecuted the case, Shaun Fitch was arrested following the execution of federal search warrants in San Marcos, California. According to court documents, the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”), the San Diego Narcotic Task Force (“NTF”), and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation (“IRS”) found a sophisticated clandestine indoor marijuana cultivation operation consisting of 144 marijuana plants at Fitch’s residence on El Corral Lane, San Marcos and approximately 102 marijuana plants at a second residence on Corte Glante, San Marcos, California. Fitch agreed that the marijuana grow at his Corte Galante residence was within 1,000 feet of a public elementary school in San Marcos.

In connection with the money laundering count, Fitch admitted that he knowingly and intentionally submitted materially false information to lenders about the true source of his income, the amount of income, and his employment history. Defendant admitted and agreed that he obtained a fraudulent loan in the amount of \$431,987.

Further hearings are set for Adam Judge Fitch and Danielle Christine Lynch, who were arrested with Shaun Fitch, on May 9, 2009. During court proceedings, Shaun Fitch admitted that he recruited his younger brother, Adam Fitch, and his then-girlfriend Danielle Lynch, to assist in his grow operations. Adam Fitch, who pled guilty to maintaining a drug premise, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 856(a)(1), on September 18, 2008, is scheduled for sentencing on March 27, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. before District Court Judge Moskowitz. Danielle Lynch, who pled guilty on September 18, 2008, to maintaining a drug premise within 1,000 feet of a public school is scheduled for sentencing on March 25, 2009, at 9:00 a.m.

United States Attorney Hewitt praised the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) for the coordinated team effort culminating of this investigation. Several local, state and federal law enforcement agencies assisted in this OCDETF investigation, including DEA, San Diego Narcotic Task Force, and IRS. The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country’s battle against major drug trafficking.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 08cr1834BTM

Shaun Fitch

Adam Jude Fitch

Danielle Christine Lynch

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Manufacture Marijuana Plants Within 1000 feet of School (100 plants or more)

Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 846, and 860

Penalties: 5-year minimum mandatory to 80 years in custody; 8 years of supervised release, \$1,000,000 fine

Money Laundering Based on Wire Fraud

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1957

Penalties: 20 years maximum, 3 years of supervised release, and \$500,000 fine

Maintaining A Drug-Involved Premise Within 1000 feet of School

Title 21, United States Code, Section 856(a)(1) and 860

Penalties: 1-year minimum mandatory to 40 years in custody, 6 years of supervised release, \$1,000,000 fine

Maintaining A Drug-Involved Premises

Title 21, United States Code, Section 856(a)(1)

Penalties: 20 years in custody, 3 years of supervised release, \$500,000 fine

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Drug Enforcement Administration

San Diego Narcotics Task Force

Internal Revenue Service