



PRESS RELEASE

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**THREE CARLSBAD RESIDENTS INDICTED ON
FEDERAL “SPICE” TRAFFICKING CHARGES**

Owner of Head Shop Also Facing Money Laundering Charges

ALBUQUERQUE – A federal grand jury in Las Cruces, N.M., yesterday returned an indictment charging Garlan R. Plumlee, 60, Justin E. Thompson, 32, and Phillip Larez, 31, all of Carlsbad, N.M., with conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance analogue, distribution of a controlled substance analogue, and possession of a controlled substance analogue with intent to distribute. The indictment also charges Plumlee with money laundering offenses.

The indictment was announced by U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales and Joseph M. Arabit, Special Agent in Charge of the El Paso Field Division of the DEA.

According to the indictment, from March 2011 through June 2012, the defendants conspired to distribute a controlled substance analogue in Eddy County, N.M. It further alleges that the defendants distributed a controlled substance analogue on Feb. 2, 2012 and June 27, 2012, and that they possessed a controlled substance analogue with intent to distribute on June 28, 2012. Plumlee also is charged with laundering the proceeds of his unlawful drug trafficking activities on Jan. 18, 2012, Feb. 10, 2012, May 23, 2012 and June 28, 2012.

The controlled substance analogue charged in the indictment is commonly referred to as synthetic marijuana or “spice.” According to the DEA, over the past several years, there has been a growing use of synthetic cannabinoids. Smoke-able herbal blends marketed as being “legal” and providing a marijuana-like high have become increasingly popular because they are easily available and, in many cases, more potent and dangerous than marijuana. These products consist of plant material that has been coated with dangerous psychoactive compounds that mimic THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. These substances, however, have not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for human consumption, and there is no oversight of the manufacturing process. Synthetic cannabinoids often are labeled as incense to mask their intended purpose.

According to court filings, the defendants allegedly used “Looking Glass,” a head shop owned by Plumlee and located on Canal Street in Carlsbad to sell “spice,” which they sold under

the names “Scooby Snax,” “Diablo,” and “Knockout.” Court filings reflect that officers seized approximately 4,779 packages of “spice” with 38 different names from “Looking Glass” on June 28, 2012, when they executed a search warrant at the business. Plumlee allegedly withdrew \$147,000 out of his business and personal bank accounts the day after the search warrant was executed.

The DEA arrested Thompson last night and Larez this morning. Thompson and Larez are scheduled to make their initial appearances on the indictment in federal court in Roswell, N.M., on Dec. 17, 2012.

Plumlee was arrested on June 29, 2012 on related charges in a criminal complaint. Plumlee is on conditions of release pending trial. A date for his arraignment hearing has yet to be scheduled.

If convicted, the defendants each face a maximum penalty of 20 years of imprisonment and a \$1,000,000 fine. Charges in indictments and criminal complaints are only accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was investigated by the DEA, the Pecos Valley Drug Task Force, the Eddy County Sheriff’s Office and the Lea County Sheriff’s Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Renee L. Camacho and E. Gareth Winstead of the U.S. Attorney’s Las Cruces Branch Office.

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