

# **Massachusetts State Troopers uncover large illegal marijuana grow; seize thousands of plants worth millions of dollars**

Over the past few days Troopers from the Massachusetts State Police Cheshire Barracks conducted an investigation into suspicious activity at a property on Jackson Road in Savoy that resulted in the discovery of large illegal marijuana growing operation. Troopers from State Police-Cheshire, along with members of the Berkshire State Police Detective Unit, the State Police Narcotics Inspection Unit, a State Police narcotics task force and a DEA agent, seized thousands marijuana plants with an estimated street value of over \$3 million dollars and arrested two men.

The investigation began on the night of July 29, when an Eversource crew responded to a pole outside 72 Jackson Rd., Savoy, to address an electrical problem. Investigation by the linemen indicated that wires had been overloaded and damaged by excessive electricity use from the house, and they approached the residence to speak to the occupant. A male exited the home and, claiming he did not speak much English and communicating mostly through gestures, refused to let the workers inspect the home's electrical hookups.

When the Eversource lineman explained that they had to shut the power to the residence off to conduct a safety check, the man, later identified as YEBIN MAI became agitated and gestured repeatedly that they could not turn off the power. The linemen made several attempts to explain the situation to MAI to no avail. At one point MAI reached over to the

Eversource lineman and placed an envelope in the pocket of the lineman's vest. The lineman saw that the envelope contained \$100 bills. The Eversource employee attempted to give the money back to MAI, who pushed the lineman's hand away. At that point the crew decided to leave the power on, leave the property, and request police presence as they felt there was a potential conflict with the resident.

Troopers from State Police-Cheshire responded. While they were speaking to the Eversource crew, a white 2019 Ford pickup with a New York registration drove down the home's driveway attempting to leave the property. Troopers stopped the vehicle to allow Eversource employees to again attempt to explain the safety hazard at the home. The driver was identified as YEBIN MAI, 28, of Staten Island, N.Y., by his New York driver's license (the man who had exited the house earlier), and kept repeating that he did not speak or understand English. When Trooper Glenn Lagerwall requested that MAI turn the truck off he immediately did so, indicating that he did understand some English. There were two other men in the truck.

An inspection of the home's four outdoor electric meters revealed that metal and wiring in and around the meters was melted from the excessive power being drawn through them. Eversource records indicated the home was using \$10,000 in electricity every month. Fresh burn marks on the wood that encased the meters indicated that there had been a small fire at one point. Determining the situation unsafe, the company cut power to the home and ordered it would remain off until repairs were made and inspected by the town.

Troopers made the following observations outside the house:

- There was a slight smell for fresh grown marijuana near the house.
- While there were no visible ventilation outlets, there were the distinct sounds of multiple fans running in the residence.
- After the power was shut off and the fans inside had stopped

running, the smell of fresh marijuana became much stronger around the residence.

- All windows were covered with closed curtains and what appeared to be plywood on the interior of the windows.
- The backyard was covered with debris from what appeared to be extensive renovations in the house. Mixed in with the debris were large green pots used for planting and some large florescent light fixtures.
- Each entrance had a door camera tracking the entrance and exit of anyone using that doorway.
- A worn path led from the back of the house into the woods. At the end of the path was a very large pile of used potting soil, all in the shape of large pots apparently from which they had been dumped. There were roots and stalks in the soil where plants had been harvested. Troopers, through training and experience, knew these to be discarded marijuana roots.

Upon questioning with aid of an online translation app, MAI stated he did not own the house, did not know who owned the house, and did not know why he, a New York resident, was at the house.

Upon consultation with a narcotics detective from the State Police Detective Unit for Berkshire County, Troopers allowed the three occupants of the truck to leave pending further investigation. The envelope containing several hundred dollars that MAI had tried to give to the lineman was returned to the suspect.

Utilizing online property records, Trooper Lagerwall determined that the house had been purchased on November 2, 2017, by a BIN HUANG for \$200,000 cash.

Believing – from the observations of the property and the excessive electrical use at the address – that probable cause existed that the home was being used as a marijuana cultivation facility, and after determining it was not licensed as such, Trooper Jacob Eugin applied for, and was

granted by a Berkshire County court, a search warrant for the home.

On the afternoon of Friday July 31, Troopers from the barracks, the State Police Detective Unit, a State Police regional drug task force, and a DEA agent executed the search warrant and found no one inside the home. Immediately upon approaching the cellar, Troopers detected an overwhelming odor of fresh marijuana. In the cellar they

they found a room full of marijuana plants organized in rows with lights above them. Each plant was in an individual pot. In the room was a network of lights, chemicals, a sophisticated hydro system and an advanced ventilation system. The team then found five more rooms on the cellar, all with almost every square foot covered with growing marijuana plants. Also located in the cellar was a long shelf stacked with hydroponic chemicals and cultivation tools.

The team moved to the first floor and found more rooms containing marijuana plants and other rooms contained supplies needed for growing marijuana.

Troopers located, in the house, bills and mail addressed to BIN HUANG at that address.

The Massachusetts State Police Air Wing deployed to conduct an overhead area search of the building and the surrounding 14 acres of the property. Upon their arrival they conducted several passes over the area but did not find any further evidence of marijuana cultivation.

A total of 3,598 marijuana plants, with a total weight of 560 lbs., were seized from the building and secured by the State Police Narcotics Inspection Unit. The estimated street value of the seized plants is more than \$3 million.

Over the next several days Troopers checked the residence repeatedly but observed no signs that the suspects had

returned. But yesterday Troopers developed information that people were inside the house. Trooper William Munch drove past the residence and confirmed that the white pickup and another vehicle were in the driveway. Troopers Anthony Martone and Joseph Pescitelli a short time later observed a white Ford F150 pickup with a New York Registration pull out of Jackson Road and head south on Route 8A. Both Troopers noted the driver matched the description and picture of YEBIN MAI.

Based on the probable cause that MAI had been trafficking marijuana, they stopped the pickup, positively identified MAI, and placed him under arrest. The passenger was then identified as BIN HUANG, 32, of Brooklyn, N.Y., the owner of the residence. Huang was then also placed under arrest based on the same probable cause. (HUANG was not one of the men in the pickup on the first day.)

MAI and HUANG were transported to the Cheshire Barracks for booking.

HUANG indicated he understood his Miranda rights. MAI claimed to not understand English, even though he had previously complied with Trooper Pescitelli's orders stated in English earlier in the stop. Trooper Pescitelli called Interpreter Services Information and was able to get a translator to explain Miranda rights to MAI in Mandarin, and MAI stated that he understood his rights. A bail clerk set bail for \$100,000 each for both men and set a court date for both to appear before North Adams District Court on Friday, August 7.

The investigation into the whereabouts of the other two men who were in the pickup truck with MAI on the first day is ongoing. Their identities are known to the Massachusetts State Police.