

# California Seizes \$120M in Illegal Cannabis in 2023 Crackdown

## California's UCETF Seizes Over \$120 Million in Illegal Cannabis Since January

**LOS ANGELES**—The Governor's Unified Cannabis Enforcement Task Force (UCETF) announced this month that it has seized over \$120 million worth of illegal cannabis since the beginning of 2024. The task force's aggressive operations led to the eradication of nearly 123,000 illegal cannabis plants and the destruction of more than 37 tons of unlicensed cannabis, equivalent in weight to over 20 cars. Additionally, law enforcement officials seized 22 firearms during these raids, further highlighting the serious nature of the illegal operations being targeted.

### Protecting California's Legal Cannabis Industry

The UCETF was established by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2022 with the mission of bolstering California's legal cannabis market by cracking down on illicit operations. Governor Newsom has been vocal about the importance of protecting the state's regulated cannabis industry, which is a significant contributor to California's economy. "The legal cannabis market brings billions of dollars to our state's economy, helping to sustain California's position as the fifth-largest economy in the world. We will not tolerate illegal operations that threaten our economy and the health and well-being of California communities," Newsom stated.

### Targeted Operations Across the State

Recent enforcement actions were concentrated across 11 counties, including Mendocino, Los Angeles, and Humboldt—areas notorious for high levels of unlicensed cannabis activity. The UCETF's efforts were not limited to curbing illegal cultivation but also addressed the associated environmental damage and labor violations. Officials highlighted that many illegal grow sites employ harmful pesticides and unregulated practices that harm California's water quality and exploit vulnerable workers, compounding the negative impact of these operations on local communities.

### Continued Success and Collaboration

Since its inception, the UCETF has seized more than \$465 million in unlicensed cannabis and eradicated nearly half a million illegal plants. The task force has executed over 300 search warrants, confiscated 150 illegal firearms, and made 38 arrests. Bill Jones, Chief of the Law Enforcement Division at the Department of Cannabis Control, emphasized the importance of collaboration among state, local, and federal agencies in disrupting the illegal market. "UCETF's efforts are continuing to break new ground in unlicensed cannabis enforcement by leveraging the expertise and knowledge of its diverse group of partners to disrupt the unlicensed market," Jones said.

## **Protecting the Industry and Environment**

The UCETF is committed to continuing its coordinated efforts to safeguard the legal cannabis industry, ensure consumer safety, and protect California's environment. By targeting and dismantling illegal operations, the task force aims to deprive transnational criminal organizations of revenue while supporting the state's legitimate cannabis businesses. As the UCETF pushes forward, its work remains critical in maintaining the integrity and sustainability of California's cannabis market.

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