

DECLARATION OF DEPUTY JAMES STRATTON

I, JAMES STRATTON, do hereby declare:

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

1. I am a Deputy United States Marshal and have been so employed since October of 2002. I have been assigned to the United States Attorney's Office as the Asset Forfeiture Financial Investigator in the District of Oregon, Portland Office for 4 years. My duties include supporting criminal investigations with the identification and seizure of assets associated with criminal activity and the initiation of civil or criminal forfeiture action against these assets. In the course of my employment as a Deputy United States Marshal, I have received training in conducting financial, money laundering, and Bank Secrecy Act investigations, and assisted in several financial investigations to include pre-seizure, third party claims and criminal money judgments.

PURPOSE OF DECLARATION

2. This declaration is submitted in support of a complaint *in rem* for forfeiture of the following real properties, hereafter referred to collectively as the "Defendant Real Properties."

3. **Defendant Property 1:** 1910 Vista Avenue SE, Salem, Oregon 97302, and more fully described as:

Parcel Number: 083W02AB01600

Beginning at the Northwest corner of Lot 7 of the SUBDIVISION OF LOTS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 AND 10 IN GARDEN HOME TRACTS, in Marion County, Oregon; and running thence Easterly along the North line of said Lot, 4.57 chains to the Northwest corner of the tract of land conveyed to Gust Heyden and wife, by deed recorded November 10, 1936 in Volume 227, Page 266, Deed Records of Marion County, Oregon; thence Southerly along the West line of the Heyden tract, 4.344 chains to the Northeasterly line of the right of way of the Southern Pacific Railroad; thence Northwesterly along the Northeasterly line of said Railroad to

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the place of beginning, being a portion of Lot 7 of the SUBDIVISION OF LOTS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 AND 10 IN GARDEN HOME TRACTS IN Marion County, Oregon.

SAVE AND EXCEPT THEREFROM that portion thereof described as follows: Beginning at the point of intersection of the South line of Lot 21 of THE SUBDIVISION OF LOTS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 AND 10 IN GARDEN HOME TRACTS, with the Easterly line of the right of way of the Southern Pacific Company's main line – said point of intersection being 30 feet easterly measured radially from the center line of said main line at Engineer's Station 121+71.5; thence Easterly along the South line of said Lot 21, a distance of 36.27 feet to a point; thence Southeasterly in a direct line, a distance of 366.11 feet to a point in the Easterly line of the land formerly owned by John H. Long and wife described in Volume 264, Page 437, Deed Records for Marion County, Oregon; thence Southerly along said Easterly line, a distance of 34.46 feet to an intersection with the Easterly line of said right of way which is 30 feet Easterly measured radially from said center line at Engineer's Station 125+89.83; thence Northwesterly along said line of right of way along curve to the right having a radius of 5,897.17 feet, an arc distance of 416.21 feet to the point of beginning.

Subject to covenants, conditions, restrictions, easements, and/or other encumbrances, if any, affecting title, which may appear in the public record, including those shown on any recorded plat or survey.

Title for **Defendant Property 1** is held in the name of Jered Hayward and Domenica Hayward.

Figure 1



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4. **Defendant Property 2:** 4705 Battle Creek Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97302, and more fully described as:

Parcel Number: 083W11D 01100

Real property in the County of Marion, State of Oregon, described as follows: A portion of Lot 10, CORNFORTH FRUIT AND DAIRY FARMS, in the City of Salem, County of Marion, State of Oregon (Plat Volume 6, Page 41), more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the Northeast corner of Lot 10 of the Cornforth Fruit and Dairy Farms in Township 8 South, Range 3 West of the Willamette Meridian in Marion County, Oregon; thence West, along the North line of said Lot 10, 529.98 feet to the Northwest corner of the grantor's land; thence South, along the West line of grantor's land, a distance of 165 feet; thence East, parallel with the North line of said Lot 10, 540 feet, more or less, to the middle of the county road along the East line of said Lot 10; thence North 22°30' West 179.14 feet, more or less, to the place of beginning.

NOTE: This Legal Description was created prior to January 01, 2008.

Title for **Defendant Property 2** is held in the name of Jered Hayward and Domenica Hayward.

Figure 2



5. Based on the evidence obtained in this investigation, including witness statements, property records, financial records, digital camera footage, and drug evidence seized during the execution of multiple warrants on properties related to Jered Hayward, Antonio Benjamin, and co-conspirators, there is probable cause to believe that the Defendant Real Properties were used and intended to be used to facilitate the manufacture of an illegal controlled substance (marijuana, and marijuana derivatives), with the intent to distribute, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841, 846, and 856, and are therefore subject to forfeiture pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(7).

6. The facts set forth in this declaration are based on the following: my own personal knowledge; knowledge obtained from other individuals during my participation in this investigation, including other law enforcement officers; my review of records related to this investigation including interviews of witnesses; communications with others who have knowledge of the events and circumstances described herein; and information gained through my training and experience. Because this declaration is submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause for the Complaint, it does not set forth each and every fact that I or others have learned during the course of this investigation.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

7. This declaration is based on a joint investigation conducted by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), along with several other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, hereinafter referred to collectively as “Investigators.”

8. Beginning in 2021 Investigators identified a drug trafficking organization (referred to in this declaration as the Hayward DTO) which was centrally located in Salem, Oregon. The

Hayward DTO utilized the internet to advertise and coordinate the sale of controlled substances, including marijuana, marijuana derivatives (butane hash oil, vape cartridges, “wax”), and psilocybin mushrooms, which are all federally scheduled controlled substances, from Oregon to other states throughout the United States, as well as internationally. These sales and payments were sent and received utilizing mail services, to include the United States Postal Service (USPS), as well as through third party, peer to peer (P2P) electronic payment companies such as Cash App. The DTO utilized the third-party messaging platform “Telegram,” which allowed them to use encrypted communications to market and advertise their wares, and to take orders from customers.

9. While cultivating and selling marijuana and creating cannabis related products such as edibles, vapes and butane hash oil can be legal under Oregon law, such actions must be licensed and regulated by Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission (OLCC). And, even if one has a permit to grow or sell marijuana in Oregon, it is illegal under state law to sell it to non-permitted facilities or to send marijuana and related products across state lines. Under Title 21 of the United States Code, manufacturing and selling the controlled substance marijuana is illegal.

10. HSI Special Agent Othic spoke with Detective Caleb Borchers of the Oregon State Police who is an expert on this subject. Detective Borchers informed him that it is legal to produce, possess and sell marijuana in Oregon only in accordance with laws and rules enacted by the State. Marijuana in Oregon is regulated by several agencies to include the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) which oversees the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP), the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission (OLCC) which oversees the Oregon recreational marijuana market, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) which regulates the growth and handling/processing of hemp (cannabis with less than 0.3% of THC content).

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11. Records checks with OLCC, ODA, and OMMP showed that none of the businesses, locations or individuals associated with this investigation had or had ever had Oregon licenses to produce or sell marijuana or marijuana related products.

12. The primary suspects in the operation utilize businesses to help disguise their illegal activity. Two of the businesses, Always Native and Bottlesandtins.com purport to be online retailers, selling skin care products as well as bottles, containers, and vaporizer cartridges, among other items. A 2 Z Trans-port LLC claims to be a general freight carrier authorized for interstate transport of property. All of these businesses are owned by suspects in the investigation and are based out of Salem, Oregon.

13. The DTO is primarily operated by the following individuals and businesses

- Jered Jeremiah HAYWARD (HAYWARD)
- Antonio Irving BENJAMIN (BENJAMIN)
- Always Native Inc / Always Native LLC – This business lists the principal place of business as 2791 19th St. SE, Unit 13, Salem, Oregon (a commercial location used by the conspiracy to store bulk products and packaging materials) and its mailing address as 4705 Battle Creek Road SE, Salem Oregon (**Defendant Real Property 2; the residence of HAYWARD** his wife Domenica HAYWARD, aka D. HAYWARD). The President of the company is HAYWARD, and the secretary is D. HAYWARD.
- Bottles and Tins / Bottlesandtins.com – This business lists its owner as Always Native LLC and principal place of business as 2791 19th ST SE, unit 13, Salem, Oregon. Its mailing address is 4705 Battle Creek Road SE, Salem, Oregon (**Defendant Real Property 2**). The authorized representative for the business is D. HAYWARD.
- A 2 Z Trans-Port LLC – This business lists its principal place of business and mailing address as 473 53rd Place NE, Salem, Oregon (BENJAMIN's Residence). The business lists Mary Lea GARDNER (BENJAMIN's wife) as Manager and Registered Agent and BENJAMIN as a member. Previously, in 2022, and 2023, it listed PO Box 13851, Salem, Oregon as a mailing address. The investigation showed this PO Box was used by co-conspirators to receive payment for drugs.

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14. **Defendant Real Property 1** is a commercial building owned by HAYWARD, and D. HAYWARD. It is the primary center for packaging and processing orders containing controlled substances, to include marijuana and marijuana derivatives. It employed multiple people and investigators continually observed narcotics transactions on the property via a pole camera that was established at the front of the business during the investigation. Workers employed by HAYWARD and BENJAMIN converted raw marijuana to oils and applied the oils to products such as cereal and candy. These products were then packaged inside the warehouse and prepared to be shipped to customers.

15. On November 29, 2022, Investigators arrested Michael Diaz, pursuant to a federal search warrant for selling narcotics. Diaz identified Telegram Channels run by HAYWARD and BENJAMIN as one of his sources of illegal marijuana and marijuana products. By examining pictures and videos from these channels Investigators were able to identify some of them as having been taken from inside **Defendant Real Property 1**.

16. On February 15, 2023, Investigators observed BENJAMIN load several appliance dollies worth of parcels from **Defendant Real Property 1** into a dark blue Mercedes GL550 registered to his wife Mary Gardner. He then delivered them to a USPS office in Salem, Oregon, placing them on the commercial loading dock. A USPS Inspector retained one of the parcels and on February 16, 2023, Investigators utilized a narcotics detection K-9 which alerted to the odor of narcotics on the parcel. A federal search warrant was issued (case 3:23-MC-156) resulting in the seizure of 1100 grams of marijuana edibles and 400 marijuana vapes. A photo of the vehicle dropping off the parcels at the Salem USPS Office and some of the items found inside the parcel are depicted below:

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Figure 3: Mercedes dropping packages



Figure 4: Marijuana edibles found inside one package



17. On September 9, 2024, Investigators observed HAYWARD and BENJAMIN, along with multiple additional co-conspirators, move products inside **Defendant Real Property 1**, to include large plastic bags that were suspected to contain flower marijuana and commercial packaging for marijuana edibles and vaporizers. Investigators also observed several of the workers at **Defendant Real Property 1** load the back of a pickup with USPS Priority Mail parcels along with larger standard brown parcels at the end of the day for transport to the Salem USPS facility.

18. On September 17, 2024, a number of federal search warrants were obtained and executed relating to the investigation. This included the DTO's main processing and packaging facility, **Defendant Real Property 1**. Inside investigators found a complex operation for the production of marijuana derivatives, and psilocybin infused edibles, as well as vaporizer cartridges (Vapes) filled with butane hash oil (a potent marijuana derivative). They also found several rooms for the processing of raw marijuana. It was clear to investigators that workers at this warehouse created

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the various marijuana products and packaged it for distribution across the United States. Some of the products found at **Defendant Real Property 1** matched products found at **Defendant Property 2** (the personal residence of HAYWARD). Below are pictures taken during the search of SUBJECT PROPERTY 1.

Figure 5: Inside of Defendant Real Property 1



Figure 6: Inside of Defendant Real Property 1

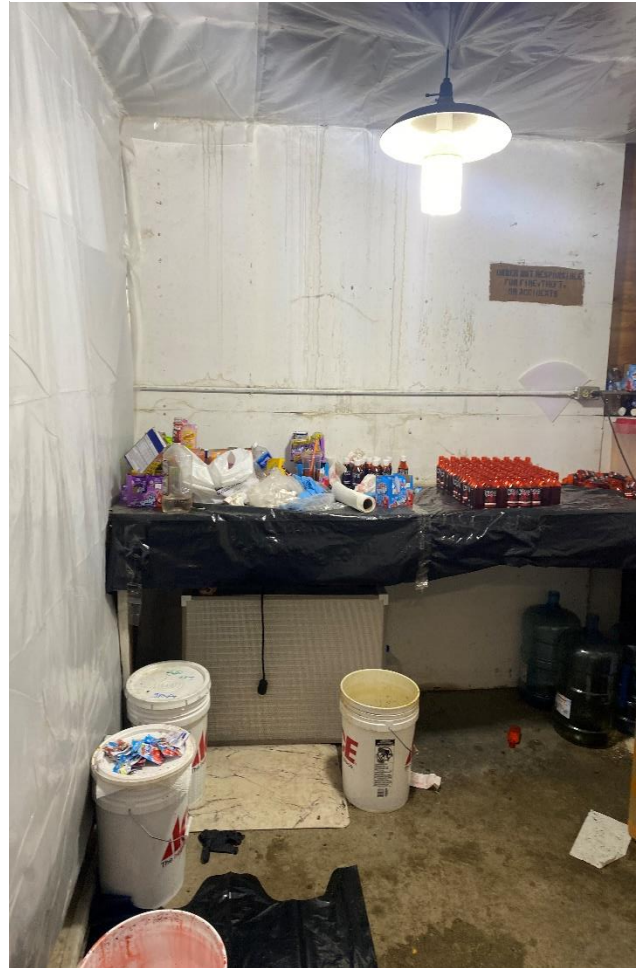


Figure 8: Products removed from Defendant Real Property 1



Figure 7: Inside of Defendant Real Property 1



19. Investigators obtained records from a Pirate Ship account associated to the DTO. Pirate Ship is a web-based shipping software company which helps customers ship packages through the USPS. It allows customers to print shipping labels in bulk at their home or office. The Pirate Ship account for the Hayward DTO became active on August 3, 2021, and continued through March 24, 2022. The records showed 2,696 shipping labels being created by the DTO for a cost of \$77,400.50 during that eight month time-period. Investigators were able to confirm that three packages containing drugs were sent using labels created from the DTO's Pirate Ship account. Investigators documented 350 parcels originating from **Defendant Real Property 1**, and two adjacent commercial facilities operated by the DTO, with weights between two ounces and fifty-three pounds. This number represents only the parcels investigators physically observed and documented leaving the facilities and being transported to the USPS. It is only a small fraction of the parcels shipped by the DTO during the scope of the conspiracy. The image below depicts the destinations of those 350 parcels observed by investigators leaving the DTO's production facilities.

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Figure 9: Map of package destinations



20. USPS business records from August 19, 2022, through August 14, 2024, show that 1,126 packages were sent by apparent DTO customers to DTO co-conspirators in Oregon; many of these packages had characteristics consistent with concealed cash shipments, such as the postal classifications, type, size/weight, large numbers from individuals versus businesses, and payment methods used for the parcels, along with the previous interdictions of concealed cash payments, and packaging retrieved through trash pulls.

21. Investigators reviewed Cash App accounts belonging to HAYWARD and his business Bottles and Tins LLC for a period between January 2022 and July 2023. During this time period the associated accounts had 2,578 P2P transactions, transfers, bitcoin activity, and cash card transactions totaling \$2,467,523.84 that were suspicious in nature and investigators believe were associated with money laundering and illegal drug sales and distribution. Some of the suspicious activity noted is included below.

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- Over 2000 P2P Cash App payments conducted for round dollar amounts between \$1.00 to \$7,500.00, most commonly between \$230 to \$820.00, which does not align with, and is much higher than the prices of products offered by Always Native LLC or Bottles and Tins. These amounts are more indicative of distributor-sized or reseller amounts of narcotics than individual sales.
- The overwhelming majority of transactions are rounded. This is almost impossible when taxes or fees are calculated for legitimate items sold via internet-based webstores such as Etsy, eBay, or privately-ran websites on an interstate or international scale. (e.g. – state by state taxes and shipping fees will vary).
- Comingling of business-related activity and potential illicit activity based on comments as to what was sold. Numerous comments do not apply to items offered by businesses Always Native LLC or Bottles and Tins. Comments such as “car parts, rent, loans, shoes, towing services, etc”.
- Use of Cash App to transmit a message in the comment section for \$1.00 – “yo it’s snowman lmk on the tele fam”
- Payment via bitcoin for third-party shipping services which is a common tactic to protect the shipper and recipient from scrutiny from law enforcement.
- The purchase of bitcoin from Cash App balances and movement of funds to external cryptocurrency wallets.

22. Based on the investigation summarized above, I believe that JERED HAYWARD and ANTONIO BENJAMIN led the DTO and used **Defendant Real Property 1** to facilitate their illegal marijuana business since at least 2021 through September 2024.

DEFENDANT REAL PROPERTY 2

23. **Defendant Real Property 2** is the primary residence of HAYWARD and D. HAYWARD. It is also the mailing address for both Always Native Inc / Always Native LLC, and Bottles and Tins / Bottlesandtins.com. Investigators established that both of these businesses were used for the operations of the DTO, including receiving electronic payments for the marijuana products and to pay for packaging materials. On August 25, 2022, Investigators conducted a trash pull from the trash bin that was located outside of 2791 19th St. SE, unit 13, Salem, Oregon (a commercial location used by the conspiracy to store bulk products and packaging materials). Investigators discovered numerous items indicative of illegal drug distribution to include vacuum packaging with money shaped bulges, some with writings indicating amount and source, paper money straps in various denominations totaling \$18,900.00, receipts, product and price lists for marijuana and edibles, postage labels for various associated conspiracy properties including a mailing label from Always Native to Eric Miller in Brook Park, Ohio which listed **Defendant Real Property 2** as the shipper's address.

24. On September 6, 2024, Investigators learned that a packaging company used by the USPS to provide USPS shipping supplies delivered approximately 1,000 USPS priority shipping boxes to "Jared Hayward, Always Native" at **Defendant Real Property 2**. During the search of **Defendant Real Property 2**, no USPS priority shipping boxes were found. However, several bundles of these shipping boxes were found at **Defendant Real Property 1**.

Figure 10: USPS Priority shipping boxes found at Defendant Real Property 1



25. On September 17, 2024, a federal search warrant was served on **Defendant Real Property 2**. The search of the residence, surrounding buildings and vehicles revealed the following evidence that the property was used to facilitate the DTO.

26. In the basement of **Defendant Real Property 2** there was a home office. I reviewed documents which had been seized by investigators from that home office. Some of the documents I found were associated with the running of the DTO and its businesses:

- Tax documents for Always Native for multiple years
- Always Native pay stubs
- Tax penalty notices for Always Native from the state of Florida
- A file containing a printout of Cash App Transactions for Always Native

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- Import documents for Bottles and Tins, including 200,000 lip tubes, 10,000 plastic trays, 6,000 silicone molds, 23,040 serum bottles (these are marked as "Always" while the other items are marked Bottles and Tins). These items are associated with the production, packaging and sale of marijuana and marijuana products.
- Notice of Seizure from the Border Patrol to “BOTTLES AND TINS c/o Dominica Hayward.”

27. The seizure notice stated that the shipment contained packaging for psilocybin laced chocolates. I was able to obtain a copy of the incident report. The report stated that Bottles and Tins was importing 2200 packaging boxes for various psilocybin laced chocolates and Marijuana Vape boxes. Some of the pictures contained in the report matched the packaging of some of the products found at **Defendant Real Property 1**.

Figure 12



Figure 11



Figure 13



Figures 11-13 are images from the Border Patrol Seizure

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Figure 15: Identical boxes from the search of Defendant Real Property 1



Figure 14: Boxes of the same product found in Defendant Real Property 1



28. Also found in the home office at **Defendant Real Property 2** was a photo light box with product samples, packaging and a camera next to it. A photo light box is an empty box with white sides and a smooth white backdrop. The photo light box is used to place products inside and take a picture. Using a lightbox allows one to produce a professional photo with good lighting and no shadows, which can be used to advertise through various platforms on the internet. A similar, though larger photo light box was found at **Defendant Real Property 1**. Investigators also found similar and identical products matching the packaging and products found in the home office during their search of **Defendant Real Property 1**. The pictures below are some examples of what was found at each location:

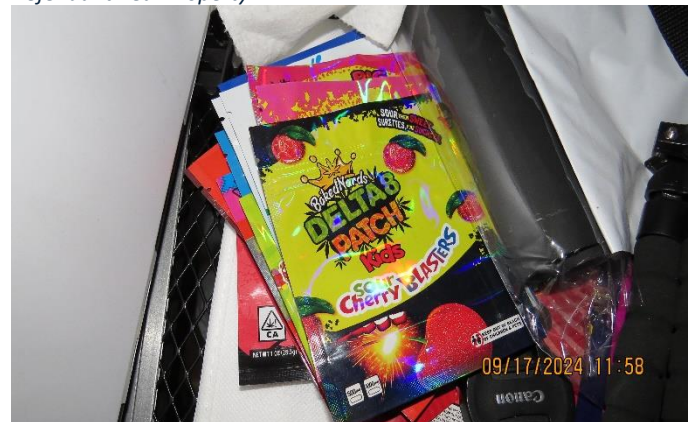
Figure 16: Photo light box, and Marijuana edibles found at Defendant Real Property 2



Figure 17: Samples found adjacent to the Photo Light Box at Defendant Real Property 2



Figure 18: Samples found adjacent to the Photo Light Box at Defendant Real Property 2



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Figure 19: Photo light box found at Defendant Real Property 1



Figure 20: Product matching figure 16, found at Defendant Real Property 1



Figure 21: Product matching the back side of the packaging in figure 18, found at Defendant Real Property 1



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Figure 22: Marijuana infused cereal products similar to the packaging in figure 18, found at Defendant Real Property 1



29. In addition to the home office evidence, investigators found several items indicating that the residence on **Defendant Real Property 2** was being used to facilitate the DTO. Those items are enumerated below:

- Money counter (found in the master bedroom)
- \$35,578 in cash (found in the master bedroom/bathroom)
- Five cryptocurrency wallets (found inside the residence)
- Twelve gold pieces found in the master bathroom

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30. In a detached garage located at **Defendant Real Property 2** investigators found:

- A Vertical Pressure Steam Sterilizer which is used in the marijuana industry (similar sterilizers were found at **Defendant Real Property 1**)

Figure 24: Vertical Pressure Steam Sterilizer found at Defendant Real Property 2



Figure 23: Vertical Pressure Steam Sterilizers found at Defendant Real Property 1



- 218.45 kilograms of marijuana
- 141.85 kilograms of psilocybin mushrooms

Figure 25: Marijuana and psilocybin mushrooms found in Detached garage



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- 217.0 kilograms of butane hash oil in glass jars

Figure 26: Marijuana and butane hash oil found in detached garage



Figure 27: Close up of butane hash oil found in detached garage



- 68.1 kilograms of THC infused Products

Figure 28: Marijuana edibles found in detached garage, similar to product in figure 29



Figure 29: A similar product using the same brand found at Defendant Real Property 1



31. Parked in the detached garage at **Defendant Real Property 2** was a Chevy Chevelle. In the trunk of the Chevelle investigators found and seized a large volume of mushrooms. Under these mushrooms were a number of hidden bags containing U.S. currency and precious metals. Some of the bags were vacuum sealed and had dirt on them, indicating they may have been previously buried. Gold and silver coins and pieces were also found in the trunk with evidence of having been buried. In the trunk there was:

- \$906,287.00 in U.S. Currency
- 124 one-ounce silver coins
- 138 gold pieces

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Figure 31: Trunk of Chevelle opened



Figure 30: Picture showing psilocybin mushrooms inside the trash bags



Figure 32: The trunk with the trash bags of psilocybin mushrooms removed



Figure 34: Picture showing bag of gold and silver pieces



Figure 33: Picture showing dirt covered bag with sealed cash inside



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Figure 35: Picture of vacuum-packed US Currency removed from the dirt covered bag



CONCLUSION

32. The evidence presented in this declaration shows that **Defendant Real Property 1** and **Defendant Real Property 2** were used and intended to be used to illegally manufacture and distribute marijuana, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841, 846, and 856, and are therefore subject to forfeiture pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(7).

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33. I have presented this declaration to Assistant United States Attorney Christopher Cardani, who has advised me that, in his opinion, the proposed complaint is supported by probable cause for both of the Defendant Real Properties.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746.

Executed this 27th day of January 2025.

/s/ James Stratton
JAMES STRATTON
Asset Forfeiture Financial Investigator
United States Marshal's Service