



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCES NUISANCE ABATEMENT ACTIONS FILED AGAINST DRUG HOUSES IN PEARL CITY AND WAILUKU

HONOLULU- Acting Attorney General Richard T. Bissen, Jr. announced today that the Department of the Attorney General's Drug Nuisance Abatement Unit has filed its fifth and sixth nuisance abatement actions. The abatements are the State's response to community complaints, and are crafted to stem drug activity in Pearl City and Wailuku, Maui.

The fifth action is the first nuisance abatement lawsuit involving drug activity at a residence in Pearl City. The complaint alleges that drugs were distributed from a house at 1454 Noelani Street. The action seeks a court order to prohibit five of the current residents from entering or residing at the house. At the State's request, the Circuit Court ordered the five to temporarily vacate the house, and prohibited them from entering or returning to the house for ten days.

On July 15, 2004, a copy of the complaint and the order was served upon Michael Batungbacal, Richard Batungbacal, Eric Huet, and Linda Lefranc. These four individuals have been removed from the residence and are prohibited from returning until a hearing on July 21, 2004, when the Court will determine whether, and for how long, the prohibition will remain in effect. After the fifth individual named in the suit is served with the complaint, she will have twenty days to respond.

The Pearl City suit was initiated when neighbors contacted the Drug Nuisance Abatement hotline and reported that drugs were being dealt from the house. On May 17, 2003, police seized narcotics from the house during the execution of a search warrant. This initial step toward closing the house to drug activity was accomplished with the cooperation of the Honolulu Police Department Crime Reduction Unit and Special Agents of the Department of the Attorney General.

The sixth lawsuit is the second nuisance abatement action filed on Maui. The complaint alleges that drugs were distributed from a house at 1918 North Street in Wailuku. The Honorable Judge Shackley F. Raffetto ordered three residents to temporarily vacate the house. The State is also seeking a court order to prohibit the three from returning to the house.

On July 16, 2004, a Special Agent of the Department of the Attorney General, along with Deputy Sheriffs from the Department of Public Safety, served the complaint and order to vacate upon two of the residents, Dexter Tadao Sato and Andrea Ruiz. They were required to vacate pending a

hearing scheduled for July 22, 2004. At that hearing, the State will ask the Court to extend the prohibition. After the third individual named in the suit is served with the complaint, he will have twenty days to respond.

Community members, who reported that illegal drug activity had been occurring at the house for years, initiated the Wailuku abatement. On October 16, 2003, illegal narcotics were seized during the execution of a search warrant. The Wailuku closure was accomplished with the cooperation of the Maui Police Department Vice Division, investigators of the Department of the Attorney General, Deputy Sheriffs from the Department of Public Safety, and the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney for Maui County.

"We expect these abatement actions to bring some relief to the Pearl City and Wailuku communities. We are committed to working with communities and other law enforcement agencies to continue closing drug houses statewide," said Bissen. Bissen also encouraged the public to report their observations regarding suspected drug houses to the police, or to contact the Attorney General's Drug Nuisance Abatement Unit at the following hotline numbers:

Oahu: (808) 586-1328

Neighbor islands toll free: (800) 9NO-METH (966-6384)

Fax: (808) 586-1371

E-mail: stopice@hawaii.gov

Reports can also be filed with the Drug Nuisance Abatement Unit by logging onto www.hawaii.gov/ag/stop_ice_index.htm.

For more information, contact:

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