



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on November 4, 2010

## Drug Tunnel, Pot Seizure in Southern Cal

On November 4, CBS News reported a U.S. seizure of 30 tons of marijuana after surveillance of a warehouse in Otay Mesa, California. After following a tractor-trailer leaving the warehouse and finding 10 tons of marijuana inside, U.S. authorities obtained a search warrant for the warehouse. They discovered an additional 4 tons of pot and the opening to an elaborate 600-yard tunnel connecting the warehouse to one across the border in Mexico.



Otay Mesa, a largely rural community within the City of San Diego is just on the international border, directly across from Tijuana. It was the site of another tunnel discovery in January 2006. [CNN reported](#) on January 26, 2006, that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and DEA agents discovered what they then called the “largest and most sophisticated tunnel yet.” It also originated in a Mexican warehouse, terminating in one on the U.S. side.

After the 2006 incident Lauren Mack, ICE spokeswoman said, “We’ve now got a dedicated tunnel task force, which works with the DEA and border patrol to proactively look for tunnels.”

Tuesday’s discovery resulted in the arrest of the tractor driver and his wife, and seizure of the marijuana bricks already packaged for sale.

Approximately four additional tons were found in the warehouse on the Mexican side. The tunnel had lighting, ventilation and a rail system to transport load of drugs to the U.S., but was believed to have been in operation only a short time, according to John Morton, ICE Director. He held a news conference outside the warehouse near the Otay Mesa truck crossing saying, “This is obviously the work of a cartel,” but said they hadn’t determined which one.

This week’s seizure was the largest ever in California, and believed to be the second largest in the U.S. The largest was a 2008 DEA finding of 33 tons in Oregon, according to DEA agent Ralph Partridge.

Wednesday’s announcement came just weeks after the largest Mexican confiscation of 134 tons believed to belong to the Sinoloa cartel.

ICE’s “tunnel task force” is trained and watchful, and this discovery points to one more success. Tuesday’s tunnel finding was only one of 125 such discoveries since the 1990s, 75 of those having been found in the last four years, according to ICE. The majority was found along the California and Arizona border with Mexico and many were incomplete when discovered.

Morton attributed the increase in discoveries to “good old fashioned law enforcement,” with agents



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closely watching thousands of warehouses that store goods moved back and forth across the border. He also believes cooperation is better than ever, making it tougher for traffickers to move their loads above ground, and forcing them to be more creative in their efforts.

Tijuana — just south of San Diego — isn't far behind El Paso, Texas, across from the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, in border violence. El Paso is one of the deadliest cities in the world, but has no monopoly on drug-related violence and deaths. On November 1, Fox News reported several gruesome deaths in [border cities](#), including Tijuana. State police there seized 14 tons of marijuana in the same neighborhood of the city where gunmen killed 13 people at a drug rehab center late in October.

Despite the heroic efforts of border agents it isn't enough. Violence is on the rise, and many believe serious crackdowns on immigration problems are desperately needed, especially in the beleaguered border states.

*Photo: A federal agent stands guard near a truck with 10 tons of marijuana and outside a warehouse along the border between the United States and Mexico where another 15 tons were seized Nov. 3, 2010, in San Diego. A 600 yard tunnel was discovered in the warehouse.: AP Images*



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