



# Department of Justice

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## **FEDS SIEZE THREE LONG-TIME PROBLEM MOTELS IN TUKWILA AS PART OF YEAR-LONG INITIATIVE**

*Owners and Managers Allegedly Facilitated and Profited from Drug Distribution and Prostitution*

Three motels on Tukwila International Boulevard, in Tukwila, Washington were seized and boarded-up by federal agents today following a year-long investigation of criminal activity in and around the motels, announced U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. More than 400 law enforcement officers and agents participated in the serving of search and seizure warrants today on the Great Bear Motor Inn, Boulevard Motel and Travelers Choice Motel. In addition to the civil seizure of the motels, four people were arrested in connection with ongoing criminal activity at the motels, including three owner-operators. In 2011 and 2012, police responded to the motels for reports of rape, robbery, assault, drug transactions, gun crimes, prostitution, and possession of stolen property. During that time, the three motels accounted for approximately 17 percent of the Tukwila Police Department's calls for service.

"Today we seek to hold the hotel owners accountable for their crimes, strip them of their criminal dens and make this area of the community safer," said U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. "I commend the Tukwila Police Department and ATF for their work – which allows us to not just prosecute the defendants, but to solve a problem. Reducing crime on International Boulevard is a top priority for the residents of Tukwila and their representatives in government, and this operation is directly responsive to the community's most pressing needs."

According to records filed to seize the motels, the Tukwila Police Department and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) jointly-led investigation used undercover officers and people working with law enforcement to document criminal activity at the motels and the role the owners and managers played in that activity. According to the affidavit filed in the case, owners and managers would collect a \$10 entry fee for those coming on the property seeking drugs or sexual services. The owners and/or managers would take the money and direct the customer to rooms to purchase drugs or sex. In some instances the person taking the "fee" would call the motel room to inform the dealer or sex worker that a customer was on the way. According to witnesses, the owner or manager would collect additional rental fees from the dealer or sex worker based on how many customers were sent to the room over the course of the day.

"These businesses have been a haven for violence and gang activity for several years. Today's operation should have a lasting positive impact on crime in Tukwila," said ATF Acting Special Agent in Charge Jim Modzelewski. "ATF remains committed to partnering with other agencies to fulfill our mission of targeting violent crime."

“The Mayor and Tukwila City Council have made public safety a priority for the citizens of Tukwila, and we are thankful for their support that has helped the police department create a safer place to live and conduct business,” said Tukwila Chief of Police Mike Villa. “Additionally, I would like to thank all of our officers, staff and partnering agencies that have made this operation a success. We are excited that jointly we have been able to make such a significant impact on crime in Tukwila.”

Since at least 2006, the three motels have consistently been among the top five motels in Tukwila with the highest calls for police service per room, with significantly higher ratios than other hotels in Tukwila. The Great Bear Motor Inn was identified and cited in August 2012, as a nuisance property by the City of Tukwila. The Boulevard Motel and Travelers Choice Motel had been sent warning letters in 2011 about being cited as nuisance properties.

Displaced residents from the seized motels will be offered transportation to a nearby church. At the church they will be fed and offered medical and mental health services, and assistance with housing and other needs from several City of Tukwila departments and other local, state and federal agencies. The City will be providing qualified low income residents with vouchers for groceries and transportation.

“The City of Tukwila expresses our deepest appreciation to the many federal, state, and local agencies who collaborated so well with our police department on this public safety action. This shows how we are all committed to improving public safety and creating great neighborhoods,” said Tukwila Mayor Jim Haggerton.

The investigation, search and seizure operation today was led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) and the Tukwila Police Department. Many additional agencies assisted the investigation and today’s operation, including the U.S. Marshals Service; Department of Homeland Security; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation; U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General; Washington State Patrol; Seattle, Auburn, Kent, Renton, Federal Way, and Port of Seattle Police Departments; Valley SWAT Team; King County Sheriff’s Office; Washington State Department of Corrections; and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

The case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorneys Justin Arnold, Jill Otake and Richard Cohen.

Press contact for the U.S. Attorney’s Office from August 27 to 30 is Executive Assistant United States Attorney Thomas Bates at (206) 553-7970 or [Thomas.Bates@usdoj.gov](mailto:Thomas.Bates@usdoj.gov).

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