

Washington, DC 20515

October 19, 2026

The Honorable Kash Patel
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

RE: Request for Federal Action Against Transnational Criminal Organizations Operating Illegal Marijuana Grows in Northern California

Dear Director Patel:

Thank you for your tireless efforts to crack down on violent crime and transnational criminal organizations. Because of your leadership and President Trump's commitment to restoring law and order, the FBI is once again putting law-abiding Americans first, with violent crime down a historic 9.3% in 2025. I am particularly grateful for your work strengthening federal law enforcement partnerships to dismantle criminal enterprises that threaten our communities.

I am writing to request your assistance in dismantling the criminal organizations behind the illegal marijuana operations that have proliferated throughout Northern California, particularly in Siskiyou and Shasta Counties. Since California legalized recreational marijuana in 2016, parts of this once-quiet region, known for its natural beauty and agricultural communities, have been overtaken by a sprawling illicit marijuana industry. Entire rural properties are now covered with rows of makeshift, plastic-covered greenhouses, known as “hoop houses,” where marijuana is cultivated using groundwater hauled in from nearby wells.¹ The consequences have been devastating, with residents facing depleted water supplies and threats to their safety, while local farmers and ranchers contend with increased competition for groundwater and the risk of contamination to their agricultural land.² In 2022, the Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury estimated that the county had 5,000 large-scale illegal marijuana cultivation sites.³ More recent reporting estimates as many as 7,000 illegal growers in the Mount Shasta Vista subdivision alone, with potential marijuana production valued at up to \$2 billion annually.⁴ Illegal cultivation has also been documented on federal land, including the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.⁵ Despite sustained local enforcement efforts, the problem persists, with the Siskiyou County Sheriff’s Office reporting the eradication of more than 332,000 illegal marijuana plants and the seizure of over 54,000 pounds of processed marijuana in 2025 alone.⁶

Of particular concern are reports that Chinese organized-crime networks may be financing and directing some of these operations. In Siskiyou County, investigators have traced cultivation properties to individuals residing outside the county, while those managing the grows often have no apparent ownership interest. These arrangements raise serious concerns about who is actually financing and controlling these operations and whether the ownership arrangements are intended to conceal their involvement. Notably, the FBI has encountered similar schemes elsewhere in California. In 2018, a federal investigation in the Sacramento region uncovered an organized marijuana trafficking network that used funds wired from China's Fujian Province and straw purchasers to acquire properties for illegal cultivation, with marijuana subsequently distributed across state lines.⁷ That investigation resulted in civil forfeiture actions against more than 100 properties. Although a direct connection to the operations in Siskiyou County has yet to be established, these similarities warrant further investigation into whether the grows are part of a broader, foreign-financed criminal enterprise and, if so, who is responsible and what their underlying ambitions may be.

Compounding these concerns is the widespread use of highly toxic pesticides, including chemicals banned in the United States and products bearing Chinese-language labels that are suspected of being illegally imported.⁸ Siskiyou County investigators have identified more than 27 pesticides at illegal grow sites, including chemicals that threaten first responders and can

¹ Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury. (2022). *The impact of commercial cannabis grows in Siskiyou County*.

https://www.siskiyoucounty.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/civil_grand_jury/page/3421/gj_20220607_report_impactcommericalcannabisgrowssiskiyoucounty.pdf

² Rufo, C. F., & Strack, H. (2026, September 16). Chinese gangsters turned this California paradise into a marijuana factory. *City Journal*. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/california-china-marijuana-siskiyou>

³ Siskiyou County Civil Grand Jury. (2022). *The impact of commercial cannabis grows in Siskiyou County*.

https://www.siskiyoucounty.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/civil_grand_jury/page/3421/gj_20220607_report_impactcommericalcannabisgrowssiskiyoucounty.pdf

⁴ Rufo, C. F., & Strack, H. (2026, September 16). Chinese gangsters turned this California paradise into a marijuana factory. *City Journal*. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/california-china-marijuana-siskiyou>

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice. (2018). Mexican national charged with growing marijuana in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edca/pr/mexican-national-charged-growing-marijuana-shasta-trinity-national-forest>

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice. (2018). Sweeping two-day operation targets international organized crime in Sacramento area neighborhoods. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edca/pr/sweeping-two-day-operation-targets-international-organized-crime-sacramento-area>

⁸ Higginbottom, J. (2025). Siskiyou County sheriff warns of nerve-agent-like pesticides at illegal cannabis sites. Jefferson Public Radio. <https://www.jpr.org/law-and-justice/2025-07-16/siskiyou-county-pesticide-emergency>

contaminate local water supplies.⁹ Marijuana contaminated with these toxic chemicals may also enter the illicit drug market without the testing required of licensed producers, which could unknowingly expose consumers to serious health risks. Given the severity of these threats, on July 1, 2025, the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors unanimously declared a local state of emergency and requested state and federal assistance to address the hazardous sites and investigate the illegal distribution of these pesticides.¹⁰ Shortly thereafter, EPA Region 9 Administrator Josh Cook directed federal environmental law enforcement personnel to investigate the illegal importation and distribution of foreign-manufactured pesticides, including their use at illicit marijuana cultivation sites.¹¹

The bottom line—our local sheriffs have worked tirelessly to combat these operations, but they need federal support to dismantle the criminal networks behind them. In your testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence earlier this year, you highlighted the FBI’s work alongside the Department of Homeland Security through 59 Homeland Security Task Forces targeting transnational criminal organizations and other serious threats. I believe that same coordinated approach could make a meaningful difference in Northern California.

To that end, I respectfully request that the FBI:

1. Direct the Sacramento Field Office, including its Redding Resident Agency, to work with the Siskiyou and Shasta County Sheriff’s Offices and Homeland Security Investigations to assess opportunities for a coordinated investigation into the criminal organizations financing and operating these illegal cultivation sites, including potential ties to foreign criminal networks. Where appropriate, coordinate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement regarding individuals involved in these operations who may be subject to removal under federal law.
2. Coordinate with EPA Region 9 and appropriate federal law enforcement partners regarding its ongoing investigation into illegal pesticides recovered at these sites, particularly to determine how these chemicals are entering the United States and whether their distribution is linked to broader criminal networks.
3. Provide my office with a briefing on the Bureau’s ongoing efforts in Northern California, including any additional resources or congressional assistance needed to address this threat, as well as the feasibility of securing additional federal funding for local marijuana eradication teams.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you personally and look forward to working with the Bureau to address this growing threat to Northern California. The law-abiding residents of Siskiyou and Shasta Counties should not have to accept threats to their safety or the contamination of their land as the price of living in rural California. I trust you share my commitment to protecting these communities and bringing the criminal organizations responsible to justice.

Thank you again for your leadership and for putting the safety of American families FIRST.

Respectfully,



James Gallagher
Member of Congress
California’s First Congressional District

CC:

Brian Tosh
Special Agent in Charge
FBI Sacramento Field Office

⁹ Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors. (2025). *Siskiyou County proclaims local state of emergency in response to illegal pesticides*. Siskiyou County. <https://www.siskiyoucounty.gov/supervisors/page/siskiyou-county-proclaims-local-state-emergency-response-illegal-pesticides>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2025). *Statement by Regional Administrator Josh F. W. Cook on the Siskiyou County illegal pesticides crisis*. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/statement-regional-administrator-josh-fw-cook-siskiyou-county-illegal-pesticides>