

Marijuana Farm Killing Ground: 7 Found Shot Dead North of Palomar Mountain

by [Chris Jennewein](#) September 8, 2020

<https://timesofsandiego.com/crime/2020/09/08/marijuana-farm-killing-ground-7-found-shot-dead-north-of-palomar-mountain/>

Seven people were shot to death at an illegal marijuana growing operation in the unincorporated community of Aguanga, 18 miles east of Temecula, and authorities were searching for clues and suspects Tuesday.

[Riverside County Sheriff](#)'s deputies responded at 12:33 a.m. Monday to a report of an assault with a deadly weapon at a residence in the 45000 block of Highway 371, north of Palomar Mountain.

Sheriff Chad Bianco said six victims were found dead in and around a single dwelling on the sprawling property. A seventh victim, a woman still alive when deputies arrived, died later at a local hospital, Bianco told a news conference.

As of Tuesday afternoon, sheriff's detectives assisted by federal agents were still combing the site for evidence and interviewing witnesses.

"We believe at this time that there were multiple suspects," he said.

More than 20 people lived at property, a "major organized crime-type operation" consisting of multiple homes and other buildings, including a cannabis nursery and facilities for drying and processing marijuana plants, the sheriff said.

"All of the people that were on the site, that were potential witnesses or the victims, were Laotian," he added, without elaborating on their ethnicity or immigration status.

Investigators seized more than 1,000 pounds of processed marijuana with a street value of \$1 million to \$5 million, along with a couple hundred live cannabis plants and a lab for extracting cannabis oil from them, he said.

California in 2018 legalized possession and use of marijuana by adults for recreational purposes, as well as commercial cultivation and distribution by businesses specially licensed and regulated by the state. But a marijuana black market still thrives, posing what law enforcement considers an ongoing public safety threat.

Bianco said the slayings in Aguanga marked the eighth homicide case — totaling 14 victims — related to his county's illicit marijuana trade this year.

"Marijuana is not a victimless crime," he said.

Anyone with information was asked to contact the sheriff's Central Homicide Unit at 951-955-2777.