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PRESS RELEASE

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Date: December 28, 2021
Contact: Travis Colby or Ryan Rasmussen
Number: (209) 385-7381



SLATE



GUZMAN

In July of 2021 as part of the Rural Crime Prevention Program in Merced County, agents of the Merced County District Attorney's Office in cooperation with deputies from the Merced County Sheriff's Office conducted an operation using a "bait trailer". This trailer was placed on private farm property and equipped with monitoring devices. The trailer was quickly stolen and tracked to an address on East Highway 140 in Merced County, where agents of the District Attorney's Office and the Merced County Sheriff's Office recovered the trailer. Video evidence connected Arturo Guzman Sr., 44, and Justin William Slate, 46, to the stolen trailer. Further search warrants at the residence where the trailer was recovered revealed a large quantity of methamphetamine and cash which were seized by the agents and a third individual was identified in connection with the drugs.

Mr. Slate was taken into custody and appeared in court on Monday, December 27, 2021, where he pled and was convicted of a felony for possession of the stolen trailer. This case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Travis Colby. Mr. Guzman has not been apprehended and currently has a warrant out for his arrest. If anyone has any information on the whereabouts of Arturo Guzman Sr., please contact District Attorney Investigator Ryan Rasmussen at 209-385-7381.

This investigation was conducted by the Merced County Rural Crimes Investigations Unit, a state grant funded program dedicated to fighting the rampant crime which plagues Merced County's farmers and ranchers. The RCIU works closely with the Merced County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies, all of whom have committed to combating these thefts, and will work in partnership with farmers, ranchers and agriculture-related businesses to combat rising crime rates in rural areas. The program's main goal is to provide protection for farm and ranch property by aggressively prosecuting suspects involved in rural crime. This unit seeks to build stronger alliances within rural communities to educate the public concerning the extent and seriousness of rural crime.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of a rural crime, please take the time to fill out a complaint form that can be found at <https://www.co.merced.ca.us/3026/Rural-Crime-Prevention-Program>, or print out and mail this form to the Merced County District Attorney's Office so that we can work together to stop these types of crimes.

END