

Sheriff's department hits the financial jackpot

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The Del Norte County Sheriff's Department could soon receive a windfall after a traffic stop led to hundreds of thousands of dollars being seized.

Details are now being released about the asset forfeiture event on Highway 101, near Washington Boulevard on February 18. Sheriff Garrett Scott reported several hundred thousand dollars in drug cash was discovered. A majority of this jackpot discovery could be returned to the Del Norte County Sheriff's Department.

Here are the details of the bust as released by law enforcement:

- Del Norte Deputy Sheriff Dustin McQuillan observed a vehicle driving in a suspicious and erratic manner.

- Deputy McQuillan pulled the vehicle over for questioning near the Washington off-ramp of the 101.
- The driver, Quirait Jimenez, produced an Arizona driver's license and no proof of insurance. He stated he was travelling from Blodgett, Oregon to Santa Rosa, then into Los Angeles.
- McQuillan, with over 100 hours training in impaired driving observation, deemed the driver was impaired.
- The deputy asked for permission to search the vehicle.
- Driver Jimenez displaying nervous behavior, according to the deputy, consented. A small amount of cocaine was observed in the driver door side pocket.
- McQuillan called for backup.
- Sgt. LeAnn McClafin arrived expediently with K9 Zuko.
- Zuko trained in drug protocol discovery, bee lined to the trunk of the rental vehicle.
- Upon opening the trunk and observing two suitcases containing bricks of cash, neatly wrapped in black tape, McQuillan arrested Jimenez under penal code 11370.66, possession of over \$100,000 derived from felony drug trafficking.
- With the scent of the drugs on the cash, the booty was secured under the state's asset forfeiture statute.
- The drug cash was counted by Auditor Controller Clinton Schaad. Total cash collected was \$375,000. Del Norte County Counsel Joel Campbell-Blair has formally applied for the cash under the asset forfeiture law.

When officially approved, Sheriff Scott's department will receive 60 percent of the forfeiture. The Del Norte district attorney will receive 10 to 15 percent.

The attorney general's office will receive 25-35 percent. Sheriff Scott shared the morale boost to his department.

"It's a proud day for Del Norte County and the men and women who serve our community," he said.

Jimenez has posted bond and no court date for Jimenez has been released at press time.