

Government's Drug War Test Kits Give False Positives on Organic and Natural Products

Healthy Counterculture Lifestyles Profiled and Targeted

WASHINGTON, Oct. 9 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- For decades law enforcement agencies including local police, DEA and U.S. Customs have used what is known as "presumptive field drug-test" kits to confirm that suspected materials are illegal drugs. The tests, which use powerful acids to react with suspected substances, change color to indicate the presence or absence of drugs. However, there is now conclusive evidence the field drug tests falsely indicate the presence of drugs when used on numerous natural products such as soap, soy milk, essential oils and chocolate. Developed over 60 years ago, these tests are made by the giant homeland security company Armor Holdings, a subsidiary of BAE Systems. At a cost of less than five dollars each, the field drug tests can be found in nearly every police car, border checkpoint, jail and in most schools.

In August and September of this year, Canadians Ron Obadia and Nadine Artemis, founders of Living Libations who make raw organic chocolate and natural personal care products, were arrested while trying to cross the US border, after a false-positive drug test on their chocolate products. Their eight month old son was taken from them, and U.S. border agents interrogated them separately and attempted to coerce confessions, even telling them their partner had confessed to smuggling hash. The couple eventually was cleared of all drug charges from the August incident after confirmation lab tests showed there were no drugs. But they were re-arrested in September while again trying to cross the US border for a US natural products trade show, despite high level communication and permission between their Canadian attorney and US Customs officials. Mr. Obadia now faces charges of exporting a controlled substance, where the only evidence is an NIK (Armor Holdings brand) field test for marijuana that was administered by Customs officials that falsely indicated that their raw organic chocolate in their hand luggage was hash. Mr. Obadia's attorney Mark Mahoney intends to subpoena Armor Holdings for all internal records and documents regarding false-positives, and a complete account of the incidents is on their website <http://livinglibations.com/media-information>.

Similar false positives have resulted in arrests over other natural products. In 2007, a false-positive for the date rape drug GHB occurred when Newport Beach (CA) police tested Dr. Bronner's peppermint soap. Based on the faulty field test, well-known musician Don Bolles was jailed for three and half days over Easter weekend. After the Bronner family helped post bail and hired an attorney, the charges were dropped when more accurate crime lab tests showed there was no GHB in their soap. Further investigation by Dr. Bronner's found that any natural soap, including brands such as Tom's of Maine and Neutrogena, will falsely test-positive for GHB using the field drug test. Read about the incident at http://www.drbronner.com/punk_rock_soap_opera.html. Dr. Bronner's is also covering Mr. Obadia and Ms. Artemis's attorney costs going forward.

"We are alarmed by the growing number of people who have been taken to jail for simply possessing organic products," says Ronnie Cummins, Executive Director of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA). "This is an attack on people who have adopted an organic natural lifestyle, whether it's the food they eat, the soap they clean with or the perfumes they use. What kind of world do we live in where nursing mothers' have their babies taken from them and are subjected to coercive interrogations to generate false confessions, over healthy organic foods like raw chocolate," says Cummins who co-founded the 800,000 supporter strong OCA. The American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU's) Drug War Project is also contemplating a class action challenge to the drug war testing industry.

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