

# NEWSRELEASE

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Paul Babeu, Sheriff

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **“Rip Crew” Conducting Traffic Stops in Vekol Valley**

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at 10:01 p.m. a Pinal County Sheriff's Deputy was patrolling along Interstate 8 near Vekol Valley. The deputy observed a white Ford Crown Victoria which appeared to be disabled on the south shoulder. As the deputy got closer, he discovered the vehicle was stuck in the loose dirt, the trunk was partially open and the rear passenger windows were down. In front of the Crown Victoria, the deputy observed a tan Ford Taurus. The Taurus was approximately 20 ft in front of the Crown Victoria and had apparently crashed into a barbed wire fence. The occupants of both vehicles fled the scene. Both vehicles contained packaged bails of marijuana.

During the investigation, it was discovered the Crown Victoria had been outfitted to represent a law enforcement vehicle. The vehicle had red and blue strobe lights, orange and white strobe lights, a siren, spotlight and front push bar.

It is believed that based upon the positioning of the vehicles, the fact the rear windows of the Crown Victoria were rolled down, the trunk open with a bail of marijuana in it, a black ski mask and black hoodie sweater found next to the driver's seat, that this was an attempted rip of the marijuana in the Ford Taurus by a "rip crew".

It appears the Crown Victoria had attempted to conduct a traffic stop on the Taurus, which veered off of the road, hit the fence and then the occupants fled. Some of the marijuana had already been loaded from the Taurus into the Crown Victoria. The engines for both vehicles were still running when deputies discovered the vehicles. Fourteen bails of marijuana were recovered, which weighed a total of 319 pounds. The street value of the seized marijuana is \$159,500.

Sheriff Paul Babeu stated, “Drug and human trafficking is a crime my deputies deal with on a daily basis. This case shows how those responsible for drug and human trafficking are attempting to conduct their business under the guise of law enforcement. This tactic not only puts law enforcement at risk but also the citizens of Pinal County.”

Below are photos of both vehicles and the marijuana seized.

