

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL**

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PR 15-33  
December 11, 2015

## **ABC Confiscates over 40 Illegal Firearms including Assault Rifles in Martinez Illegal Stills are also Seized in Concord**

**Martinez & Concord** (December 10, 2015) - Agents of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) arrested a Martinez man and seized more than 40 illegal and unregistered firearms including assault rifles, grenade launchers and gun silencers from a residence in Martinez. The action was taken after ABC seized two illegal stills at a storefront in Concord along with more than 200 gallons of illegal distilled spirits and over 500 cases of illegally produced wine.

The suspect, 53 year-old Sterling Hartwell Albert of Martinez, was arrested at his business on an arrest warrant obtained by ABC Agents. The suspect was arrested for possessing a still (felony) and selling alcoholic beverages without a license (misdemeanor). Additional felony charges were added to the arrest for possessing the illegal and unregistered firearms.

In recent months, ABC had been investigating a storefront located at 5052 Forni Drive, Suite C in Concord after receiving a complaint that distilled spirits (rum and whisky) were being manufactured and sold illegally at the property. ABC Agents conducted an undercover investigation and obtained search warrants for both the business and the suspect's residence. At the residence, ABC found multiple illegal firearms including a grenade launcher, fully-automatic assault rifles and silencers. The firearms were seized and turned over to the California Department of Justice Bureau of Firearms Task Force.

The possession of unregistered stills and the production of distilled spirits without a federal permit and without payment of tax are federal felony offenses which may result in the seizure and forfeiture of land and other property associated with the illegal activity. Illegal stills are potentially explosive and can pose a significant threat to public safety. A distilled spirit made illegally may also not be safe to consume.

The following agencies assisted ABC with the service of the warrants: Contra Costa County District Attorney's Office, Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office, Contra Costa County Hazardous Materials Team, the federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, and the California Department of Justice Bureau of Firearms Task Force.

ABC is a Department of the Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency.