



EL PASO INTELLIGENCE CENTER

OFFICER SAFETY ALERT

TACTICAL BULLETINS TEAM - BULLETIN EB10-23

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Marijuana Bales Coated with Halon® Chemical Seized in Lafayette County, Louisiana

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May 6, 2010

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On April 14, 2010, a Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, Sheriff's Office agent seized 16 bales, containing 400 pounds (182 kilograms) of marijuana, that were coated with a variety of substances, including the chemical "Dibromodifluoromethane," a fire-extinguishing agent also known as Halon® 1202. The marijuana was seized from a late-model GMC U-Haul cargo truck that was stopped for a traffic violation on eastbound Interstate 10, near Lafayette, Louisiana. The driver was allegedly en route from Pasadena, Texas, to either Baton Rouge or LaPlace, Louisiana. When the truck was searched with a drug-detector dog, the dog alerted positively to it for the presence of drugs. The agent opened the cargo compartment of the truck and observed the bales of marijuana on the compartment floor with only a blanket covering two bales. *The agent reported that when he initially opened the compartment a strong pesticide-like odor emanated from it, instead of the smell of marijuana (which should normally be the case).* Suspicious that the bales could have been booby-trapped, the agent secured the cargo compartment and called local Fire Department/HAZMAT specialists. The Fire Department/HAZMAT specialists tested the bales with a chemical detector and determined that one or more hazardous chemicals were present. The bales were opened at a secure location and were found to be wrapped with multiple layers of plastic smeared with the following substances between the layers: mineral oil, kerosene, petrolatum (petroleum jelly), and *Dibromodifluoromethane*.¹ While it is probable that these substances were applied to the bales as odor-masking agents to prevent the drugs from being detected, the agent on the scene reported that the substances did not prevent his dog from alerting to the marijuana. *(Sources: Seizure information and photographs courtesy of the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office and the Louisiana State Analytical & Fusion Exchange (LA-SAFE), Baton Rouge, LA.)*

¹Analyst note: *Dibromodifluoromethane* (aka: CBr₂F₂, Halon® 1202, and Freon® 12B2) is a halogenated hydrocarbon that is a colorless nonflammable liquid. It is used in the synthesis of dyes and pharmaceuticals and as a fire-extinguishing agent. Direct contact with skin and eyes may cause burns, and it may cause illness if ingested. If exposed to high temperatures, it may emit toxic fumes. Although *Dibromodifluoromethane* is not considered highly toxic, inhalation of concentrated vapors may cause light-headedness, giddiness,

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disorientation, nausea, vomiting, and possibly narcosis (narcotic-like effects). *(Sources: Chemical information obtained from various open sources.)*



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Questions or comments in reference to this report can be directed to the EPIC Research and Analysis Section, Special Projects Unit, Tactical Bulletins Team, IA Jeff Jasek at (915) 760-2445, or Unit Chief Frank Mallory at (915) 760-2024.

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