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Marijuana Black Market Is Thriving, Despite Legalization

By **Crime and Justice News** | July 31, 2017

Marijuana smugglers are growing and shipping vast quantities of illicit cannabis across the country by mail, motor vehicle and airplane, reports USA Today (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/07/31/marijuana-black-market/507417001/>).

Many operations are based in states where growing marijuana is legal, such as Colorado. In June, prosecutors there busted a 74-person operation producing 100 pounds of marijuana per month — enough to generate \$200,000 monthly, tax free, for more than four years. Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman says legalization has given cover to illicit weed operations.

For decades, the black market was the only source of recreational marijuana in America. But Colorado voters in 2012 approved a ballot initiative to legalize the drug, and seven states followed in 2014 and 2016. Nearly 65 million Americans live in states where adults can legally consume marijuana for any reason. Legalization advocates have long argued that regulating marijuana forces the industry out of the shadows and into the public eye, where the drug can be taxed and the black market effectively eliminated. But because marijuana remains illegal in so many states, smugglers are taking advantage of the patchwork of laws.
