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Md. Mayor Target of Botched Pot Raid

Couple's Dogs Slain; Federal Probe Urged

By Brett Zongker The Associated Press

BERWYN HEIGHTS, Md. — Mayor Cheye Calvo got home from work, saw a package addressed to his wife on the front porch and brought it inside, putting it on a table.

Suddenly, police with guns drawn kicked in the door and stormed in, shooting to death the couple's two dogs and seizing the unopened package.

In it was 32 pounds of marijuana. But the drugs evidently didn't belong to the couple.

Police say the couple appeared to be innocent victims of a scheme by two men to smuggle millions of dollars' worth of marijuana by having it delivered to about a half-dozen unsuspecting recipients.

The two men under arrest include a FedEx deliveryman; investigators said the deliveryman would drop off a package outside a home, and the other man would come by a short time later and pick it up.

A furious Calvo said Thursday that he and his wife, Trinity Tomsic, are asking the U.S. Justice Department to investigate the July 29 raid.

"Trinity was an innocent victim and random victim," Calvo said outside his two-story, red-brick house in this middle-class Washington suburb of about 3,000 people. "We were harmed by the very people who took an oath to protect us."

Calvo insisted the couple's two black Labradors were gentle creatures and said police apparently killed them "for sport," gunning down one of them as it was running away.

"Our dogs were our children," said Calvo, 37. "They were the reason we bought this house, because it had a big yard for them to run in."

The mayor, who was changing his clothes when police burst in, also complained that he was handcuffed in his boxer shorts for about two hours along with his mother-in-law, and said the officers didn't believe him when he told them he was the mayor. No charges were brought against Calvo or his wife, who came home in the middle of the raid.

Prince George's County Police Chief Melvin High said Wednesday that Calvo and his family were "most likely ... innocent victims," but that he would not rule out their involvement, and he defended the way the raid was conducted. He and other officials did not apologize for killing the dogs, saying the officers felt threatened.

Police said Wednesday that they had arrested two men suspected in a plot to smuggle 417 pounds of marijuana, and seized a total of \$3.6 million in pot. Investigators said the package that arrived on Calvo's porch had been sent from Los Angeles via FedEx, and they had been tracking it ever since it drew the attention of a drug-sniffing dog in Arizona.

Police intercepted it in Maryland, and an undercover detective posing as a deliveryman took it to the Calvo home.

Calvo's defenders — including the Berwyn Heights police chief, who said his department should have been alerted ahead of time — said police had no right to enter the home without knocking.

But officials insisted they acted within the law, saying the operation was compromised when Calvo's mother-in-law saw officers approaching the house and screamed. That could have given someone time to grab a gun or destroy evidence, authorities said.

Neighbors in Berwyn Heights, which Calvo described as "Mayberry inside the Capital Beltway," have rallied around the couple. On Sunday night, supporters gathered on a ballfield to pay tribute to the family and the dogs. A banner on the wooden fence around Calvo's yard read, "Cheye and Trinity, We support you, Friends and Citizens of Berwyn Heights." Around it were dozens of handwritten messages from supporters.



STEPHEN J. BOITANO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Berwyn Heights, Md., Mayor Cheye Calvo and wife Trinity Tomsic address a news conference at their house in Berwyn Heights on Thursday. Calvo is asking for the U.S. Justice Department to investigate a county police raid on his home during which his two dogs were killed.

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