Written by By Abigail Rowe Sun Editor
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McKinley County Sheriff's Dep. Johnson Lee was traveling west on Highway 66 just before 1 am April 19 when he saw a speeding car and made what he thought would be a routine traffic stop.

Lee walked over and saw two men in the car. One of the two was shaking and appeared to be nervous, according to Lee's report. As he came closer, the officer spotted a box of ammunition in the driver-side door.

Lee had the driver, Franklin Warren, 43, of Gamerco, step outside of the car while he issued a citation. Warren told Lee his license was suspended, and when the officer asked where the two men were headed, Warren said the Redwood Lodge, a nearby motel.

Warren continued to seem "very nervous," Lee wrote in his report, "as he was rocking back and forth and leaning against (the) patrol vehicle."

Lee asked Warren the name of his passenger. Warren said it was Anthony, and that he didn't know his last name. A second officer, MCSO Dep. Brandon Salazar walked over to the car and the other passenger said his name was Anthony Martinez—a name that came back empty after the officers ran it through their system.

Checking against the car registration, officers found the name Anthony Palacios, and asked the passenger to step out of the car, as it appeared he had given them a false name.

Growing suspicious, Lee brought his K9 Max out to the car. Max sniffed around and alerted officers that there were narcotics in the car. When Lee asked the men if they were carrying drugs, Warren replied that there was a joint in the console—and firearms in the back seat.

Warren said the guns belonged to his sons. He didn't answer when Lee asked permission to search the car. Lee told Warren he would have the car towed and obtain a warrant for its search.

The background check came back, and officers were informed that Warren had a previous felony charge, and Palacios had an outstanding warrant for charges on drug paraphernalia and false identity.

As promised, Lee had the car towed and later searched it for evidence. Along with a 12-gauge shotgun and a Smith & Wesson rifle, Lee uncovered meth, crack cocaine, and marijuana. He also found scales for measuring out the drug amounts and baggies to package and distribute them in.

After logging the evidence, Salazar put out a warrant against the men on charges of trafficking and possession of a controlled substance.

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