



Staff photo/SEAN DOUGHERTY

Deputy Al Stickley loads counterfeit design items taken from apartment into Sheriff's Office van.

Police claim fakes in home

Second raid in month yields another \$1 million booty

By STEVE NICHOL
Staff Writer

BOCA RATON — Roughly \$1 million in counterfeit trademark merchandise was confiscated on Wednesday from a Boca Raton man's apartment, the second such large seizure there within a month, authorities said.

Using a search warrant, Palm Beach County sheriff's detectives discovered an apartment-turned-boutique, with 700 items including jewelry, rhinestone purses, and satin-finished handbags.

On May 14, authorities seized 1,400 items at the same apartment belonging to Gerone "Jerry" Kaplan.

"He's just a hard learner," said sheriff's Detective Sgt. Steve Beck, who supervised the operation on Wednesday. "That's how he makes his livelihood."

Detectives estimated last month's seizure at \$1 million.

Kaplan was arrested in January in

VIOLATION

■ Trafficking in counterfeit trademark goods is a second-degree misdemeanor subject to a maximum of 60 days in jail and \$500 fine under Florida law. The federal criminal code for the same crime calls for fines up to \$250,000, five years' jail, or both.

a similar incident. A trademark violation is a misdemeanor under state law, and a county judge has consolidated the previous arrests involving Kaplan into one case yet to be heard.

Joining seven sheriff's detectives and a deputy on Wednesday were two code enforcement officers, three designer representatives, and a supervisor for the state Department of Revenue's enforcement section.

The city's chief code enforcement officer said the business was definitely a violation but said no action

was necessary because the Sheriff's Office had confiscated the merchandise.

A Revenue agent said records taken in the seizure would have to be studied to determine if taxes were not collected on the sale of merchandise.

Once authorities, helped by designer representatives, inventoried the items, including fake Rolex watches and Judith Leiber purses, a pickup truck and minivan hauled the merchandise away.

A judge approved the search of Kaplan's apartment after an undercover buy was made there on Monday, authorities said. Another purchase was made on Wednesday morning before the search.

But between the purchase and search, Kaplan left the apartment.

Detectives entered with a master key provided by the complex.

Free-lance writer Steven R. Biller contributed to this report.