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## RV center owner says he is victim of smear campaign

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**By Sabra Stafford**

Crime Desk

[sstafford@turlockjournal.com](mailto:sstafford@turlockjournal.com)

209-634-9141, ext. 2002

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The owner of a Turlock RV store under investigation by the Department of Motor Vehicles says he is the victim of a malicious campaign waged by his competitors and state officials in an effort to shutter his doors permanently.

Through his attorney, Best RV Center's Naiel Ammari released a statement claiming that the allegations against him held no validity.

Investigators with the DMV, accompanied by Stanislaus County Sheriff's deputies, served out a search warrant at Best RV Center on July 13 and seized several boxes of documents and computer systems. The DMV is investigating complaints that allege Best RV Center was misleading customers into believing a "California Pre-Delivery Inspection Fee" of \$750 was a state mandated fee, when no such fee actually exists. The matter is currently under investigation by the DMV.

In his statement, Ammari fretted that the DMV's actions amounted to a closure of his business.

"Refusal to immediately return the seized items will severely cripple my business and will soon force the closure of my business altogether," he wrote.

Ammari's attorney Peter Rausch said his client never misled customers about the fee and that it is a standard practice at dealerships to charge such a fee. The fee was charged for inspections of the vehicles to verify everything was in compliance and up to code, Rausch said. He claims the investigation was initiated by Ammari's competitors, who are angry over his success.

DMV spokesman Mike Marando said the investigation was launched because several complaints were lodged against the dealership by customers who were charged the \$750 fee.

On Wednesday, Rausch asked a Stanislaus County Superior Court judge to order the return of the property confiscated during the search. Rausch claimed that without the computers and the documents, including some for pending sales, Ammari would be forced out of business by week's end and would have to lay-off his 25 employees.

The judge took no formal action, but requested all the involved parties step outside and come up with an amicable solution. Rausch said the negotiations were "positive and constructive" and that DMV officials agreed to allow the dealership access to copies of all the material seized during the search.

In a letter sent to the DMV's Legal Affairs Division, Rausch said competitors have learned that just the "mere reporting of unfounded allegations to law enforcement organizations can in itself have a punitive and damaging impact of the target victim of the assault."

Rausch said the ongoing probe has raised issues with the dealership's creditors, but that they are addressing their concerns and have reached agreements that will "bootstrap the dealership into the next few weeks."

Rausch claimed in the letter that the search warrant was served out "SWAT-style" and that the employees were held like "prisoners."

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He also claims that Ammari has been the victim of a smear campaign by his competitors and “anti-Muslim bias,” even though Ammari, a Jordanian native, is of the Christian faith. “Truth and facts, however, have little to do with these attacks,” Rausch wrote. To contact Sabra Stafford, e-mail [sstafford@turlockjournal.com](mailto:sstafford@turlockjournal.com) or call 634-9141 ext. 2002.

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