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‘Home for the Holidays’ Human Trafficking Operation Recovers 19 Victims in Three Days

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that 19 victims of human trafficking were recovered over three days this month during law enforcement’s annual Home for the Holidays Human Trafficking Task Force Operation in San Diego County. The victims were offered services to help them escape and heal from exploitation and human trafficking.

This operation also resulted in four adult men, including a registered sex offender, being arrested and charged with pimping, pandering and violating a protective order. Six misdemeanor citations were issued to sex buyers.

“The ugly truth is that sex trafficking remains a lucrative criminal industry fueled by demand that generating over \$810 million a year in San Diego County,” **DA Stephan said**. “I’m proud of our work with the San Diego Regional Human Trafficking Task Force, my office’s Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division and all our partners that work around the clock to recover victims as young as 12. Together they hold human traffickers and criminal buyers accountable for their crimes. The ongoing efforts of the task force demonstrate that law enforcement will not tolerate this modern-day slavery of vulnerable victims who are bought and sold like a slice of pizza.”

Operation Home for the Holidays is an annual, multi-jurisdictional operation aimed at recovering victims of human trafficking, offering victim services, apprehending and prosecuting traffickers, and reducing the demand of sex for pay. During Operation Home for the Holidays, law enforcement officers worked undercover as sex buyers to identify and contact potential victims of trafficking and traffickers by responding to online advertisements for sex. This year’s operation was the sixth annual and was conducted at motels in Chula Vista, National City, and San Diego on December 10, 11, and 12.

“Operation Home for the Holidays is a key part of our efforts to keep our communities safe for the holidays and all year round,” **said Attorney General Bonta**. “I want to thank our partners at the San Diego Human Trafficking Task Force, who work to support victims, survivors, and their families.

Together, we will continue to disrupt human trafficking operations and achieve meaningful results that uplift vulnerable Californians.”

Beginning January 1, a new law goes into effect that targets sex buyers, protects minors and supports survivors of human trafficking. AB 379, authored by Assemblymembers Nick Shultz (D-Burbank), Stephanie Nguyen (D-Elk Grove), and original author Assemblymember Maggy Krell (D-Sacramento) makes the buying of a minor for sex, a felony crime. It also reverses a portion of a misguided law that decriminalized loitering for prostitution, making it a crime again for criminal buyers. The law also creates a Survivor Support Fund to provide grants to community-based organizations that provide direct services and outreach to victims of sex trafficking and exploitation. Finally, the law increases civil penalties for specific human trafficking-related violations by businesses.

“HSI is committed to a victim-centered approach in the fight against human trafficking, prioritizing both the well-being of victims and the pursuit of justice against those responsible for these crimes,” said **Kevin Murphy, (A)Special Agent in Charge for Homeland Security Investigations** in San Diego. “Through the Human Trafficking Task Force, our collaborative efforts have led to the removal of dangerous offenders from the community and ensured that the 19 victims received the support and services they need.”

The defendants in this case were arraigned on Friday, December 19 and Monday, December 22. If convicted they face between six and 20 years in prison.

The Human Trafficking Task Force is a cooperative effort led by the California Department of Justice with task force membership by the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office, San Diego County Sheriff’s Office, San Diego Police Department, Southwest Border High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, California Highway Patrol, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, National City Police Department, San Diego City Attorney’s Office, San Diego County Probation Department,

If you or someone you know is being coerced, deceived or forced to engage in sexual activity, or labor and needs help to leave, you can call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 to access help and services. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.

Over the past four years, there have been 23 arrests, 65 rescues—including two juveniles—and three guns recovered during Home for the Holidays Operations. The Human Trafficking Task Force conducts similar operations throughout the year. In 2024, the task force recovered 47 juveniles through various operations. In 2025, 62 juveniles have been recovered.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the

office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.