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New Task Force Has Early Success Focusing on Chronic Crime Among the Homeless

Four Repeat Offenders Sentenced for Felony Drug Crimes

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#), City Attorney Mara Elliott, and San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit announced successful felony prosecutions today stemming from a recently-formed task force to address the issue of chronic criminal offenders within the unhoused population in the City of San Diego. The San Diego Accountability Renewal and Community Health Task Force (SD ARCH) was formed late last year to focus on criminal offenses most negatively impacting unhoused individuals and surrounding communities. These offenses include repeated drug sales, drug use, theft and vandalism.

Four defendants have been convicted and sentenced in connection with the task force's work. They include Frederick Johnson, 59, who was arrested for possession of methamphetamine for sale after officers found an ounce of methamphetamine plus an additional 13 vials of the drug in his van. Johnson was later re-arrested after he failed to appear in court and officers found more meth and five cell phones in a tent he was living in at Linda Vista Park.

In a second case, defendants Della Infante, 59, Angel Bernardo Reyes, 55, and Ramon Julio Byars, 44, were all convicted of sales of a controlled substance after undercover officers repeatedly bought methamphetamine from them. In the months prior to the incidents, there were more than 21 narcotics-related crime cases and over 25 arrests and citations for narcotics related incidents in the area around Sports Arena Blvd.

“It is unacceptable to allow blatant and repeated criminal activity to continue unabated without consequences,” said DA Stephan. “Offenders who commit the types of crime negatively impacting residents, business owners and other unsheltered individuals are a small but active percentage of the homeless population. Our goal is not to simply incarcerate members of that community but, instead, compel them to accept the treatment and services they need and thus, assist them in ending the cycle of crime and homelessness.”

“San Diegans have the right to expect us to use our powers as prosecutors wisely, focusing our resources of the most serious crimes, such as drug trafficking,” said City Attorney Elliott. “The progress we are announcing today reflects our commitment to that approach.”

“The San Diego Police Department is committed to addressing crime on our streets, particularly when it involves drug activity,” said Chief Nisleit. “The SD ARCH Task Force brings together a collective group to make an even greater impact. We are proud to be a part of this task force that will hold criminals accountable, provide resources to those in need and reduce crime in our communities.”

Two years of data show the overdose rate for people experiencing homelessness is 118 times higher than the general population. Being a victim of domestic violence, child abuse and human trafficking are found to high factors contributing to a person becoming homeless— especially for women and children.

“If we want our community to improve, we can’t allow open-air drug markets to rule homeless encampments,” DA Stephan said. “Unhoused people are already vulnerable and to further keep them in the clutches of addiction is cruel.”

“I want to strongly support the statement from our District Attorney that we cannot and will not allow open air drug markets on the streets of our city,” said Elliott. “Those experiencing homelessness or suffering from addiction are entitled to our compassion, but that does not give anyone a license to commit crimes in our community. We take drug offenses very seriously in San Diego because drug offenses often lead to the commission of more serious crimes.”

The SD ARCH Task Force is comprised of representatives from the District Attorney’s Office, City Attorney’s Office and San Diego Police Department and it meets at least once a month.

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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.