Operation Crossover

**Sergeant Phil Gonshak:**

Good Afternoon, my name is Sergeant Phil Gonshak from the Seal Beach Police Department and I am the Public Information Officer who will be moderating this press conference. We would first like to publicly recognize some of our dignitaries who have joined us for today’s event:

Seal Beach Mayor Ellery Deaton

Seal Beach City Council Members Mike Levitt, Gary Miller, and Gordon Shanks

Seal Beach City Manager Jill Ingram

Seal Beach Chief Joe Stilinovich

Los Alamitos Chief Todd Mattern

Cypress Chief Jackie Gomez-Whiteley

Westminster Chief Kevin Baker

Torrance Chief Mark Matsuda

Fountain Valley Captain Mike Simko

Long Beach Commander Don Wood

Orange County Assistant Sheriff Lee Trujillo and Lt. Jeff Hallock

San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Captain Robert Guillen

Laguna Beach Captain Jason Kravetz

Signal Hill Captain Chris Nunley and Lieutenant Mel Krizo

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Before we continue with our press conference, I would ask Mayor Ellery Deaton to come to the podium and speak on behalf of the City of Seal Beach.

**Mayor Ellery Deaton:**

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**Sergeant Phil Gonshak:**

Next, for the full details of this investigation and press conference, Chief Joe Stilinovich will address you all. Please wait patiently until everyone is finished speaking to begin with your questions. If at any time Chief Stilinovich is unable to answer your questions, he will be referring to Seal Beach Major Crimes Sergeant Joe Miller, who has a vast understanding of the events that have transpired. However, if Sgt. Miller is needed, please refrain from videotaping him due to the sensitivity of this investigation. Following Chief Joe Stilinovich’s initial address, the Kroger’s - Organized Retail Crime (ORC) Communications Director, Kendra Doyle and Torrance Police Chief, Mark Matsuda have a few statements they would like to make as well. With that, Chief Joe Stilinovich:

**Chief Joe Stilinovich:**

Good Morning, I’m Chief Joe Stilinovich from the Seal Beach Police Department. The Seal Beach Police Department is pleased to announce the arrest of XX members of the criminally organized, “Insane Crip Gang”. We believe these gang members are responsible for stealing safes and burglarizing nearly 50 Southern California restaurants. Additionally, we believe this gang is responsible for nearly 50 Southern California grocery store burglaries, where they would load up shopping carts to steal large amounts of high end alcohol and electronics and flee out emergency doors to an awaiting escape vehicle. Kroger’s - Organized Retail Crime Investigators shared the felonious property crime information with the Seal Beach Police Department’s Criminal Investigations Bureau, who then initiated the investigation. Although the investigations started with property crimes, many of these suspects have substantial and violent criminal histories.

After several months of investigation, we were able to apprehend these criminals. Detectives from the following police and sheriff’s departments participated in this operation:

Seal Beach

Cypress

Los Alamitos

Long Beach

Westminster

Los Angeles

Torrance

Irvine

Laguna Beach

Downey

La Palma

And Signal Hill Police Departments

and

the Orange County

San Bernardino County

And Riverside County Sheriff’s Departments

Additionally, the Kroger’s - Organized Retail Crime Investigators were outstanding private sector partners.

The Seal Beach Police Department began this investigation when the first alcohol push-out burglary happened in Seal Beach on November 14, 2013. The loss from this single incident was over $5,000 in high end alcohol and electronics. The suspects spent less than eight minutes in the store.

This crew then struck the same Ralph’s with a similar push-out burglary on December 18, 2013. Our detectives had limited suspect descriptions to work with and the cases were heading towards the unsolved bin. Working collaboratively with the Kroger’s - Organized Retail Crime Investigators, our detectives were able to discover new leads which allowed us to positively identify some of the suspects. Without the Organized Retail Crime Investigators’ keen skills, knowledge, and diligence, none of this, including today, would have been possible.

In late 2013, detectives identified a series of commercial burglaries, where suspects would enter closed restaurants with a large yellow crowbar and steal safes from the businesses. Additionally, the same gang of thieves would enter grocery stores, targeting high end alcohol and electronics to steal. These restaurant and grocery store burglaries occurred in numerous cities and counties which geographically went north to Ventura County, east to San Bernardino County, south to Orange County, and as far west as Seal Beach. In other words, this coordinated criminal effort, spanned five Southern California counties.

As these investigators from the prior described agencies reviewed each of the reports and re-interviewed witnesses and victims, the suspects’ profiles began to emerge.  The profile revealed that all of these restaurant and grocery store burglaries were being committed by members of the criminal street gang known as the “Insane Crip Gang”.

Informational flyers were sent to dozens of police agencies in an effort to identify the magnitude of the investigation and coordinate possible tips or leads. This collaborative law enforcement effort allowed the investigation to move forward. Detectives identified several possible suspects, and their associates while conducting surveillance spanning five counties.  Through the dedicated efforts of these detectives from many different agencies, we were able to locate witnesses who could positively identify numerous suspects involved.

Today, we finished our first portion of this investigation and the case continues onward. During the course of Operation Crossover, we utilized the following SWAT Teams to execute 10 search warrants:

West County SWAT

Long Beach SWAT

Orange County Sheriff’s SWAT

Torrance SWAT

Irvine SWAT

And El Segundo SWAT.

These 10 search warrants were executed in the following cities:

Long Beach (5)

Signal Hill (1)

Los Angeles (2)

Paramount (1)

And Hawthorne (1)

During these 10 search warrants, XX suspects related to this investigation were taken into custody.

The Los Angeles and Orange County District Attorney’s office will be the primary justice systems involved with the prosecution of these suspects. A list of suspects arrested in conjunction with this investigation and the charges for each will be provided to all in attendance today with a media packet including a CD of all the evidence relevant to this press conference.

During the investigation, detectives were able to construct a current list of involved gang members with the objective of tearing down its core financial source and enterprise by placing these criminals in jail, while solving as many crimes as possible.  Detectives believe these suspects are responsible for additional burglaries.  With all of these suspects in custody, we are hoping that victims and witnesses will be willing to come forward and provide further evidence and information that will be needed to charge the suspects with additional crimes.

Our department has worked closely with the Los Angeles and Orange County District Attorney’s Office to ensure these individuals are held to answer and face the maximum penalties allowed for the protection of our neighborhoods and communities.  This investigation continues law enforcement’s efforts to reduce violent crime in all of our communities by not only targeting those responsible for the crimes, but by ridding any gang members involved and those who assist them in pillaging our local communities.

The Seal Beach Police Department could not have accomplished this operation without the hard work and diligence of all the agencies and detectives, our private sector partners and the cooperative efforts of the media and the community.

We ask that anyone who has information regarding this case or other crimes that could be associated with this case contact Seal Beach Police Department’s, Burglary Detective Mary Martinez at (562) 799-4100, Ext. 1110 or by email at mmartinez@sealbeachca.gov. Anonymous tips may be submitted by phone at (855) TIP-OCCS (855-847-6227) or online at [www.occrimestoppers.org](http://www.occrimestoppers.org).

We have additional partnering agencies who would like to speak. Please hold any questions regarding this operation until the end.

**Sergeant Phil Gonshak**

Thank you Chief, up next on the agenda, Torrance Police Chief Mark Matsuda.

**Torrance Chief of Police**, **Mark Matsuda**

**…**

**Sergeant Phil Gonshak**

Thank you Chief, up next on the agenda, Kroger’s - Organized Retail Crimes, Communications Director, Kendra Doyle.

**Kroger’s - Organized Retail Crimes, Communications Director, Kendra Doyle:**

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**Sergeant Phil Gonshak**

Thank you Director Doyle, up next on the agenda is questions and answers with Seal Beach Police Chief, Joe Stilinovich.

**Chief Joe Stilinovich:**

Are there any questions from our media partners?

**Sergeant Phil Gonshak:**

We thank you all for coming today and helping us accomplish our mission statement of driving down crime and improving the quality of life for the residents and visitors of Seal Beach.

Possible Questions and Answers:

Q: If SBPD is the lead agency, why the use of the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office?

A: Although some of these crimes occurred in both counties, each crime is considered a separate offense. Therefore, whatever crimes were committed in Los Angeles County will be prosecuted there. Similarly, whatever crimes were committed in Orange County will be prosecuted here.

Q: How far back did this crime spree begin?

A: The best information we have at this point, dates the crime spree to have begun in the early months of 2013 for both the safe and alcohol burglaries.

Q: What were some of the worst types of crimes committed by these criminals and how long ago?

A: The worst types of crimes committed by members of the Insane Crip Gang include the murder of Melody Ross at Wilson High School, in Long Beach back in 2009. Some of the other crimes committed by these individuals include attempted murder, carjacking, robbery, sexual assault, grand theft auto, burglary, and numerous other felonious crimes.

Q: What kind of prison time is each of the main suspect(s) looking at receiving if found guilty on all charges?

A: Because they are documented gang members and some of them are already felony strike offenders, the district attorney’s office would be the ones to make a determination of sentences preferred. Current charges include:

 1. Burglary – CPC 459

 2. Possession of Stolen Property – CPC 496

 3. Gang Enhancements – CPC 186.22(a)&(b)

Q: What is/are the sentencing terms for gang enhancements?

A: Sentencing terms for gang enhancements are found under California Penal Code -186.22(a) & (b) – However, prison terms are decided individually per suspect depending on if the charges were misdemeanor or felony and the suspect(s) criminal history.

The list of all the suspects arrested and their charges are identified below:

**Name:                          Age:     City of Residence:        Charge(s):**

XX