

Two Costa Mesa residents included in arrests of nine for Firearms and Drug Trafficking in Orange County

Costa Mesa Police Special Investigations Detectives recently assisted in a six-month investigation that resulted in the arrest of nine defendants now charged with numerous firearms and narcotics charges for trafficking firearms, heroin and methamphetamine.

Two of those arrested were from Costa Mesa.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) began the investigation in September 2018, which included Costa Mesa Police, Huntington Beach Police and Homeland Security Investigations.

Throughout the investigation, law enforcement obtained 20 firearms, ammunition, more than five pounds of methamphetamine, and 131 grams of heroin in controlled purchases. In addition, various firearm parts and ammunition were seized. Several of the guns bought were self-manufactured and un-serialized, numerous firearms were unregistered National Firearms Act (NFA) weapons, and at least one firearm was proven to be stolen from a residential burglary.

The two federal criminal cases are being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office, Santa Ana Branch Office.

"This type of law enforcement partnership amplifies our efforts to combat these crimes and allows us to cast a wider net," said Costa Mesa Police Chief Rob Sharpnack. "The apprehension of these criminals is a step toward making our communities safer. We will continue to work with our partners

in our pursuit of those who threaten public safety.”

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One of the indictments returned by a federal grand jury alleges Timothy A. Murphy, a.k.a. “Papa Smurf,” 67, of Costa Mesa; Brad J. Nelson, 50, of Newport Beach; John W. Breneman, 46, of Irvine; and Danny Ramos, a.k.a. “Bull,” 49, of Santa Ana, conspired to distribute methamphetamine and heroin.

The indictment also states Murphy, Nelson and Breneman sold pistols, shotguns, and ammunition to a prohibited person on various dates and in varying amounts. Nelson, a prohibited person, is also charged with possessing firearms illegally.

The second indictment returned by a federal grand jury alleges Joseph T. Doody, 30, of Huntington Beach; Brian P. Ros, a.k.a. “Rosco,” 32, of Santa Ana; and Steve M. Bonales, a.k.a. “Ghost,” “G,” and “S-Man,” 40, of Santa Ana, conspired to distribute methamphetamine.

The indictment alleges Caleb T. Sagiao, 36, of Harbor City, engaged in the business of selling firearms without a federal license on numerous occasions selling semi-automatic shotguns with no serial numbers, homemade AR-15 type pistols and rifles, and seven homemade AR-15 type short-barreled rifles.

Short-barreled rifles fall under the National Firearms Act and must be registered with ATF. They were not. Therefore, federal charges of possession of unregistered firearms were levied against Sagiao. According to the indictment, Ros was also

engaged in the business of selling firearms without a federal license. Doody, Ros and Sagiao allegedly sold various firearms to a prohibited person throughout the investigation. Bonales, a prohibited person, is charged with a felon in possession of a firearm. According to the indictment Shelia L. Cundall, 48, of Costa Mesa, is charged with selling a firearm to a prohibited person.

"When ATF partners with its local PDs to reduce violent crime by targeting these individuals who pose the greatest threat to public safety, the enforcement strategies produce results," said ATF Special Agent in Charge of Los Angeles Field Division Carlos A. Canino. "These partnerships are true force multipliers. They enable law enforcement to identify, investigate and seek prosecution against these illicit gun possessors, and drug and firearm traffickers."

"This case is just one of the great examples of our partnerships in law enforcement," Huntington Beach Police Chief Rob Handy. "The investigation and prosecution of these dangerous individuals would not have been possible without the excellent partnerships we enjoy with both local and federal law enforcement agencies. It is because our teams worked together, these dangerous people and weapons have been removed from our communities."

"This investigation is a perfect example of the positive impact achieved in the community when local and federal law enforcement join forces to dismantle the dangerous criminal networks operating in our neighborhoods," said Joseph Macias, Special Agent in Charge for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Los Angeles. "I commend the investigators for their coordination and tireless work. This joint investigation is a victory for law enforcement and the communities we serve."

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