



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

TODD SPITZER

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PRESS RELEASE

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**Hundreds of Violent and Dangerous Felons, Guns
and Narcotics off Orange County Streets as a Result of
Orange County District Attorney's AB 109 Crime Impact Task Force**
*Ten Attempted Murder Suspects, Los Angeles Burglary Ring Charged with Stealing \$1.97 Million in Jewelry,
Guns and Designer Items among AB 109 Task Force Arrests over last 3 years; OCDA Todd Spitzer
federally deputizes AB 109 investigator to work with ATF Violent Crime Task Force to
Investigate, Arrest Suspects in Smash and Grab, Home Invasion Robberies*

SANTA ANA, Calif. – An undercover AB 109 Task Force of District Attorney investigators, police officers, and probation officers has taken hundreds of violent and dangerous felons off Orange County streets since Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer created the task force three years ago. The task force was created by District Attorney Spitzer in July 2019 in response to a state law which allows convicted felons to serve their time in local jails and then be supervised by local authorities after their release instead of state parole agents.

The task force's arrestees include ten attempted murder suspects, an 18-year-old man who escaped from a halfway house just hours after being released from jail 15 months early for killing his mother when he was only 13, and five defendants charged with stealing \$1.97 million dollars in jewelry, guns, and designer items as part of an elaborate burglary ring out of Los Angeles targeting high-end Orange County homes.

Dozens of guns, including assault weapons, and enough fentanyl to kill hundreds of thousands of people, have been seized as a result Investigations by the District Attorney's AB 109 Crime Impact Task Force. Many of the task force's cases have been referred to the United States Attorney's Office to allow federal prosecutors to seek the toughest sentences for these repeat offenders.

This week, District Attorney Todd Spitzer finalized an agreement with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to cross deputize an AB 109 investigator from the Orange County District Attorney's Office to work with the ATF Orange County Violent Crime Task Force (OCVCTF). Over the last five years, the ATF Task Force, which includes ATF agents, as well as Fullerton and Brea police officers, has investigated and arrested individuals and crews committing commercial robbery series, smash-and-grab robberies, home invasion robberies, commercial burglaries, as well as firearm and narcotic offenses that occur within or otherwise impact Orange County. The task force also works routinely with the Santa Ana Police Department.

“Hundreds of dangerous felons are off Orange County streets along with illegal drugs and guns as a result of the AB 109 Task Force,” said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. “The ongoing efforts by the state Legislature to decriminalize felonies and release dangerous and violent felons back into our communities have forced local law enforcement to protect our residents from violent criminals who should have never been let out in the first place. By working together with our local and federal law enforcement partners, and pursuing stiff penalties to keep repeat offenders behind bars where they belong, we are making our streets safer and protecting our residents. We look forward to partnering with the ATF’s Violent Crime Task Force to further safeguard our communities from the negative effects of decriminalizing serious and violent crimes.”

“Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer and OCDA Bureau of Investigations Chief Paul Walters have been great allies in our effort to combat violent crimes in Orange County and we are pleased to formalize our relationship with them and welcome the District Attorney’s Office to the Task Force,” said ATF Resident Agent in Charge Paul D’Angelo, who oversees the Orange County Violent Crime Task Force. “We look forward to our partnership and know that the OCDA’s Office will bring valuable resources and expanded prosecutorial options to the OCVCTF.”

AB 109, the California Public Safety Realignment Act of 2011, allows for current non-violent, non-serious, and non-sex offenders to be supervised at the local County level. These crimes include burglary, forgery, corporal injury on a child, and aggravated evading a police officer. AB 109 inmates are only categorized by their current offense, not the entirety of their criminal history, which can include serious and violent felonies.

The AB 109 Crime Impact Task Force, which is housed at the Santa Ana Police Department, is made up of five District Attorney Investigators, one Santa Ana Police Officer, one Orange County Probation Officer, and an Investigative Assistant and a Research Analyst from the District Attorney’s Office.

Since July 2019, the AB 109 Task Force has arrested 567 AB 109ers on new crimes, including 10 attempted murder suspects, 38 stolen car suspects, and 426 suspects arrested on felonies. Fifty-five guns, including six assault weapons and an M10, were seized by the AB 109 Task Force

The AB 109 Task Force has located wanted subjects in other states, and coordinated their arrests and extradition back to Orange County to face charges.

The AB 109 Crime Impact Task Force has conducted investigations in collaboration with numerous agencies, including the U.S. Marshals, FBI, DEA, the California Highway Patrol, the Fullerton, Anaheim, Orange, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Costa Mesa, and La Habra Police Departments, and the Orange County and Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Departments. The AB 109 Task Force also conducted investigations with Santa Ana Police Department’s Directed Patrol, the Major Enforcement Team, Civic Center Patrol, Homicide, Robbery, Vice, Auto Theft, Burglary, Economic Crimes, and Special Crimes Units.

“One-year reconviction rates for supervised populations (Post-Release Community Supervision [PCS] and Mandatory Supervision [MS] cases) showed a significant decrease in the last three years. Specifically, for fiscal year 2018-2019 and 2020-21, reconviction rates for PCS supervised cases have declined from 26.2 % to 20.9% and for MS cases they have declined from 30% to 19.3%,” said Orange County Probation Department Interim Chief Bryan Prieto. “Additionally, Probation’s collaboration with the AB 109 Task Force over the past three years has helped to further the Department’s Mission of serving the community using efficient and research supported corrections practices.”

AB 109 TASK FORCE CASE EXAMPLES

- **IKE SOUZER** – On Easter 2022, AB 109 investigators from the District Attorney’s Office and the Orange County Probation Department arrested wanted fugitive Ike Souzer, an extremely dangerous and violent convict who had escaped from a halfway house after being released from the Orange County Jail more than 15 months early. In addition to other charges, he was convicted in December of attacking

three correctional officers and was ordered to wear an electronic monitor for the remainder of his sentence which was set to expire on July 9, 2023. Souzer was tracked down by the AB 109 Task Force during a countywide search for the wanted fugitive.

- **MAIRA IBARRA** – Attempted murder stabbing suspect Maira Ibarra was arrested on November 29, 2021 after leading officers on a high-speed pursuit, driving on the wrong side road through the City of Cypress. Ibarra hit two vehicles before fleeing on foot and attempting to carjack another vehicle before she was arrested. Ibarra has been charged with one felony count of attempted murder, one felony count of a prohibited person possessing ammunition, one felony count of evading a peace officer, one felony count of evading a peace officer while driving opposite of traffic, one felony count of failing to stop at a hit and run accident that resulted in death or injury, and one felony count of possession of a firearm by a felon. She has also been charged with one felony count of carrying a loaded stolen firearm in public, one felony count of carrying a loaded unregistered firearm in public, two felony counts of possession of a controlled substance with the intent to sell, one felony enhancement of attempted premeditated murder, one felony enhancement of personal use of a deadly weapon, and one misdemeanor count of using a stolen identity. Ibarra was wanted for a \$250,000 warrant for auto theft and felony evading as well as a \$15,000 PRCS arrest warrant when she was arrested.
- **DURANGO BURGLARY RING** – Five Los Angeles men accused of running a multi-county burglary ring responsible for stealing \$1.9 million in designer watches and purses, jewelry, guns and cash in 44 residential burglaries in Orange and San Bernardino counties were arrested by SWAT teams in May 2020. The District Attorney’s AB109 Task Force, along with the Fullerton, Anaheim, and Buena Park Police Departments, the Orange Sheriff’s Department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, assisted in the investigation. Jurandir Endnilson Penate, 24, Erick Daniel Soria, 27, Alvaro Ramos, 37, Eugene Yi, 35, and Sergio Soto, 33, all of Los Angeles, were arrested in the multi-agency operation.

Felony criminal charges were filed against the five defendants in connection with the rash of burglaries that began in Chino Hills in August 2019 and continued in Fullerton, Anaheim Hills, Villa Park, Lake Forest, Yorba Linda, Buena Park, and Irvine through February. Four of the burglaries occurred when residents were home.

Soria, who was on parole for residential burglary, is facing 83 years and 8 months in state prison if convicted on all charges. Soto, is a third striker with prior convictions for residential burglaries and assault with a deadly weapon, is facing 35 years to life in state prison if convicted on all charges. Ramos, who is currently on parole for residential burglary and evading police, is facing 125 years in state prison if convicted on all charges.

Yi, who has one prior strike for a 2005 great bodily injury conviction, is facing 19 years and 8 months in state prison if convicted on all charges. Penate is facing 55 years and 4 months in state prison if convicted on all charges.

- **LAWRENCE QUAST** – Convicted drug dealer Lawrence Quast was sentenced to 10 years and three months in federal prison after AB 109 investigators found $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of methamphetamine, $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of fentanyl, 101 grams of fentanyl and Xanax pills, and more than \$3,500 in cash in Quast’s Costa Mesa motel. Quast had six prior convictions for drug sales when he was arrested by the AB 109 Task Force in October 2020.

- **SANDY GONZALEZ** – Sandy Gonzalez was wanted on a \$100,000 warrant for child abuse and endangerment when she used a gun to hold up a high end shoe store in Fullerton in March 2020. The AB 109 Task Force tracked Gonzalez to a motel in the city of Wilmington in Los Angeles County, where she was arrested by AB 109 task force members and Fullerton police officers. Two weeks before Gonzalez was convicted of the armed robbery, she escaped from custody. She was recaptured and sentenced to six years in state prison for the armed robbery and two years in state prison for the gun.

Visuals, including mug shots and photos of examples of guns and narcotics seized by the AB 109 Task Force, can be downloaded here: <https://www.dropbox.com/t/RP7mojY6jHsnw9PZ>

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