



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

San Diego Police Department

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MULTIPLE ARRESTS MADE IN OPERATION PAWN STARS

(San Diego) In June 2009, a significant street robbery series was identified in City Heights. The losses reported in these crimes were usually jewelry and cell phones. In January 2010, Mid City detectives arrested a juvenile for burglary. The juvenile confessed to the crime and revealed there was a local business buying stolen property. He identified a business on University Avenue. Detectives through investigative techniques were able to identify other local businesses buying stolen property. It was believed this contributed to an "open market" for robbers and other criminals.

The detectives established a plan on January 28, 2010, utilizing undercover officers to go into Maria's and identify them as being in possession of stolen property. On multiple occasions this property was purchased by Maria's employees. Additionally, detectives identified two Wireless Connection businesses in City Heights that were buying property purported to be stolen. Undercover officers sold property to employees at each of these locations on several occasions.

On February 23, 2010, Mid City Division officers initiated "Operation Pawn Stars." Four search warrants were served at the listed businesses and at the residence of one of the business owners. Three suspects were taken into custody, including the owners of both businesses and an employee. Several hundred pieces of jewelry and cellular phones were recovered from each location, including the property sold to the businesses by the undercover officers. At one business location a rear room held blow torches and other equipment. Several melted down pieces of gold jewelry were recovered from this room. Additionally, approximately \$24,000 in cash was recovered from both businesses.

The investigation is continuing into other businesses that might be dealing in stolen property in City Heights.

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