

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, August 02, 2017

CONTACT:

Lt. Scott Wahl at (619)-531-2675 or [swahl@pd.sandiego.gov](mailto:swahl@pd.sandiego.gov)

**Public Awareness for Virtual Extortion Kidnapping Scams**

**San Diego**– Virtual extortions or virtual kidnappings are telephone calls made by a suspect claiming a person the victim knows has been kidnapped or threatened.

Personal information of the “kidnapped person” is often obtained from social media or open sources giving credibility to the caller. The caller demands money in exchange for the return of the “kidnapped person.” In all virtual cases, the “kidnapped person” has no knowledge of the kidnap plot and is perfectly fine.

Over the last seven days, the San Diego Police Department has responded to ten similar calls received by several businesses in Southern and Central Divisions. In many of the calls, a Spanish-speaking person indicated they are a member of an organized crime group and warn of armed men entering the business if money is not paid. We believe all of these calls to be a hoax. If individuals or businesses receive these types of calls, we urge them to call the police immediately. Responding officers will evaluate the call for validity and direct resources as needed.

Lt. Scott Wahl will be available for on camera interviews today between 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM.

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