

PRESS RELEASE

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Eleven Arrested in Check Fraud Case

On November 9, 2013 a local merchant contacted the Coalinga Police Department reporting three individuals had attempted to cash fraudulent checks in his business. The reporting party provided a description of the vehicle the suspects had left the scene in. A short time later Coalinga Police Officers observed the reported vehicle and made a traffic stop. As the vehicle yielded to the police vehicles the four occupants fled on foot into the surrounding neighborhood. The four occupants were located and arrested for attempting to cash the fraudulent checks. Additional evidence was located in the suspects' vehicle which indicated they had been committing these types of crime for some period of time.

Detectives with the Coalinga Police Department started a follow-up investigation and developed enough information that resulted in a Judge in the Fresno Superior Court issuing a search warrant for a residence in South Central Los Angeles. Detectives and Officers from the Coalinga Police Department assisted by the Los Angeles Police Department served the search warrant on November 22, 2013. During the search computers, records, blank check paper and false identification were seized. A female suspect was arrested at the residence.

Over the next 8 months the evidence seized was reviewed and revealed that these suspects were members of a criminal conspiracy group that traveled throughout the Central Valley and the adjoining four states cashing fraudulent payroll checks. The

records seized on November 22, 2013 revealed this group had obtained over 4.5 million dollars during the past 4 years. Merchants in Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Merced, and Stanislaus Counties had been victimized by this group. Investigators learned that this group was also suspected of agriculture thefts in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties.

During this 8 month investigation the Coalinga Police Department Detectives were assisted by detectives with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, Kern County Sheriff's Department, San Luis Obispo Sheriff's Department, Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department, US Postal Inspectors, Homeland Security- ICE and the California Attorney General's Office.

On August 21, 2014 The Coalinga Police Department obtained search warrants for 4 residences in South Central Los Angeles. With the assistance of the above agencies the warrants were served, additional evidence was seized and 11 arrests were made. The involved suspects will be prosecuted by the California Attorney General's Office in Los Angeles County.









