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CITY ATTORNEY DELGADILLO PARTNERS WITH FEDERAL, LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS IN MAJOR SWAP MEET CRACKDOWN

Federal, Local Authorities Target Piracy, Unlicensed Vending, Health Code Violations, and Gang Activity at Alameda, El Faro Swap Meets

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo today announced his office has partnered with a multitude of local and federal law enforcement agencies in an undercover sweep operation targeting illegal activities at the Alameda and El Faro Swap Meets in South Los Angeles.

“In our continuing effort to create safer neighborhoods throughout the City by working together to crack down on businesses and locations rife with criminal activity, we have targeted the Alameda and El Faro Swap Meets,” said City Attorney Delgadillo. “We intend to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law any and all individuals found to be engaging in illegal activities at these two locations.”

Recently, investigators from both the Los Angeles Police Department and the private sector have reported major problems at the Alameda and El Faro Swap Meets, including the piracy of music, movies, clothes, sunglasses, jewelry, vitamin and pharmaceutical goods; unlicensed vending including food vending, black market cigarette sales; and criminal activity by members of the 38th Street Gang.

Beginning in December 2007, LAPD and private sector investigators conducted a series of undercover purchases at the Alameda and El Faro swap meets to document various pirating activities. Those operations were followed by a major law enforcement sweep today which included distribution of cease and desist letters to illegal vendors as well as LAPD arrests. Investigators also examined the swap meets – including all food vending operations – to verify health and safety conditions at the Swap Meet.

Officers with the LAPD’s Newton Division Gang Unit – also participating in the task force – endeavored to make gang injunction violation arrests where the facts warranted such action. Any gang members found in or around either the Alameda or El Faro swap meets is subject to arrest for violation of the terms and conditions of the 38th Street Gang Injunction.

“The safety of our community members is of the utmost importance to the LAPD and to our partners in law enforcement,” said LAPD Deputy Chief Sergio Diaz. “It is our hope and belief that this investigation and the accompanying enforcement will serve to reinforce the need to conduct business in legal and safe ways to all merchants in this area.”

The joint taskforce was coordinated through efforts by the City Attorney utilizing several branches of his Criminal and Special Litigation Branch, including the Neighborhood Prosecutors, Gang Division, Code Enforcement, Tobacco Enforcement, and Identity Theft and Fraud Units, in close partnership with the LAPD. Representatives from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and The BuenaVida Group- Dr. Pacheco Vitamins provided private investigators as well as additional support. The Federal Drug Administration has provided local law enforcement officials with a laboratory to test the counterfeit vitamin products.

“This issue of counterfeit health products is one of paramount importance because we are not only talking about selling tainted products, we are talking about human lives and public safety,” said Dr. Luis Pacheco, whose vitamins are believed to have been counterfeited and illegally sold at the Alameda and El Faro Swap Meets .

The Alameda Swap Meet is owned by the Alameda Family Limited Partnership, a firm controlled by Steven Sukhwa Koh and Jung Koh.

The El Faro Swap Meet is owned by Santee Associates LLC, controlled by Rabie Khoubian and Farzad Khoubian, and TML Investments LLC, controlled by Ehssan Khoubian and Esmaeil Khoubian. Private investigators working on behalf of the entertainment industry documented heavy music piracy at several swap meet kiosks. El Faro management continues to ignore communications from the entertainment industry’s anti-piracy divisions.

Both the Alameda and El Faro Swap Meets operate as sites for merchandise sales out of small individually vendor rented kiosks offering a variety of goods including clothing, jewelry, entertainment and grocery items. The busy locations have been the site of 400 police calls for service between November 2005 and November 2007 resulting in 138 arrests for charges including rape, homicide, robbery, grand theft and other misdemeanor crimes.

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