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SFPD Launches Blitz Operations to Combat Retail Theft 23-124

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The San Francisco Police Department has launched a new citywide program to make arrests in organized retail theft cases by deploying blitz enforcement operations at local retail locations, Chief Bill Scott announced Friday.

The operations are already showing promising results, with officers making dozens of arrests recently and recovering thousands of dollars in stolen merchandise at San Francisco's most victimized retailers.

The SFPD is planning on funding the surge in enforcement operations through a recently awarded $15.3 million state grant aimed at combatting organized retail crime. This work is possible because of the SFPD's strong partnerships with our retail community.

"Our city will not tolerate criminals ransacking our businesses," Chief Scott said. "Not only are these crimes devastating to our business community and local economy, too often we've seen these crimes escalate into violence. I want to thank our hard-working officers who are making sure our city is a safe place for businesses and shoppers."

The most recent blitz operation occurred Tuesday evening at the San Francisco Centre and included assistance from officers with the California Highway Patrol's Organized Retail Crime Task Force.

Teams of uniformed and plainclothes officers observed nine individuals stealing from businesses inside the shopping mall and swiftly arrested them and recovered the stolen property.

Officers fanned out through the mall, partnered with loss prevention employees, and communicated with a central command post to make the arrests. Officers have conducted similar operations at businesses like drug stores, grocery stores, and apparel stores around the city.

On Sept. 22, officers recovered an estimated $100,000 in stolen merchandise after arresting three prolific Bay Area thieves.

Such operations will continue to occur throughout the city for the foreseeable future. Our local business community and state law enforcement partners are providing valuable assistance in these cases.

"We will protect our businesses from being targeted by retail theft operations," Mayor London Breed said. "I want to thank our police officers who are doing the work to investigate and disrupt these organized rings and arrest those who are stealing from our businesses anywhere in this City. Retail theft impacts our businesses, workers, and residents, and it must be stopped."

The San Francisco District Attorney's office has been a strong partner and was recently awarded state grant money to fund a dedicated retail theft prosecutor.

"SFPD's blitz enforcement operations will yield strong cases that will enable my office to do everything we can in the courtroom to ensure there is accountability and consequences for brazen retail theft," District Attorney Brooke Jenkins said. "The blitz operations coupled with vigorous prosecution from my office will send a message that these crimes are taken seriously, and San Francisco is not the place to commit these kinds of crimes. We will enforce our laws and stand for our neighborhoods and businesses that have been targeted and victimized by brazen thieves."

Retail crime has been an ongoing challenge in San Francisco. Year to date, larceny cases have dropped 10% citywide since last year, but the overall number of reported cases is nevertheless a major concern.

Retail theft has sadly increased substantially around the country in recent years, with retailers reporting billions in losses. Cities like Washington DC, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and many others have all reported increases in retail theft.

Even as reported cases are decreasing locally – and arrests are increasing – the SFPD recognizes there is much more work to be done.

We again want to thank our business partners for their assistance in these cases and assure everyone that the SFPD is committed to holding criminals accountable and making our city safe.

Downloaded video from SFPD's Blitz Operation at SF Centre.

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