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SFPD Makes Arrests in Auto Burglary Investigation 24-102

Image



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In a citywide operation, a juvenile suspect was arrested for conducting multiple auto burglaries at two different tourist destinations on the same day while working with a known accomplice.

On September 7, 2024, San Francisco officers from Central, Northern, Southern, Tenderloin, and Taraval stations were assigned to an auto burglary suppression operation. At approximately 3:15 p.m., officers from Central Station who were working in plainclothes capacity in the area of the Palace Fine Arts observed an auto burglary occur. The suspect vehicle fled eastbound on Girard Road. Officers tried to maintain surveillance of the suspect vehicle but lost it in the area due to evasive, illegal maneuvers and the risk to public safety. Officers broadcasted the suspect vehicle information over the police radio.

A short time later, a San Francisco Police Department sergeant observed the suspect vehicle traveling southbound on Masonic Avenue at Golden Gate Avenue. Officers conducted surveillance of the vehicle in the area of Alamo Square, another tourist destination that is often targeted by auto burglars.

A San Francisco Police Department sergeant broadcasted the suspect vehicle's whereabouts as well as the suspect's description when they observed the suspect commit an auto burglary at Fulton and Scott Streets. Officers continued surveillance on the suspect vehicle as it fled southbound on Buchanan Street. The suspect, again, committed numerous moving violations, and officers lost sight of the vehicle.

A third SFPD sergeant relocated the suspect vehicle traveling eastbound on Interstate 80 near the 4th Street exit. Officers followed the vehicle to the 800 block of West MacArthur Boulevard where the sergeant observed the suspect, later identified as a male juvenile, remove property from inside the suspect vehicle and get into a nearby vehicle. The sergeant recognized this second vehicle to be associated with a prolific auto burglar, 27-year-old San Francisco resident, Robert Sonza.

Officers formulated a plan and utilized a tire deflation device to stop the suspect vehicle, which continued to flee at a high rate of speed. The suspect vehicle was involved in a collision at Piedmont Avenue and Pleasant Valley Avenue where Sonza exited the vehicle from the driver's seat and fled on foot. The juvenile fled on foot and was taken into custody in a cemetery on the 5000 block of Piedmont Avenue in

Oakland.

Through the course of the investigation, the first suspect vehicle, involved in the auto burglaries at the Palace of Fine Arts and Alamo Square, was determined to have been a stolen vehicle. A search of the vehicle yielded a burglary tool and property from an auto burglary that occurred on September 2, 2024, in the area of the Palace of Fine Arts. A search of the second suspect vehicle yielded more stolen property and a firearm. Officers recovered and reunited property from recent auto burglaries to multiple victims.

“The hard work and dedication displayed by our patrol officers, sergeants, and investigators in this incident is what has led to a 56% drop in auto burglaries this past year,” said Chief William Scott.

“The acts committed by this suspect were not a crime of opportunity but a deliberate plan to target visitors at popular tourist destinations. Despite the dangerous and evasive driving of the suspects, SFPD personnel continued their surveillance from a distance for the sake of public safety and took the suspect and his accomplice, a known, prolific auto burglar, into custody.”

Robert Lionel Sonza was arrested for receiving stolen property (496(a)PC), accessory after the fact (32 PC), resisting or delaying arrest (148(a)(1) PC), carrying a loaded firearm (25852(a)PC), person convicted of a misdemeanor violation of a firearm related offense (29805(b)PC), felon in possession of a firearm (29800(a)(1) PC), carrying a concealed firearm in a vehicle (25400(a)(1)PC), possession of a large capacity magazine (32310 PC), conspiracy to commit a felony (182(a)(1) PC).

The juvenile suspect was cited for theft of a vehicle (10851 CVC), receiving stolen property (496(a)PC), 2 counts of burglary (459 PC 2nd degree), possession of burglary tools (466 PC), resisting or delaying (148(a)(1) PC) and released to their parent.

While arrests have been made this remains an open and active investigation. Anyone with information is asked to call the SFPD Tip Line at [1-415-575-4444](tel:1-415-575-4444) or Text a Tip to [TIP411](https://www.sfpd.org/tip411) and begin the text message with SFPD. You may remain anonymous.

SFPD Case: 240-564-044

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