

Organized Retail Crime Case of the Year

Coast 2 Case Lead by Columbia Sportswear in collaboration with JCPenney, Lululemon, Macy's, Gap, Inc. and more.

Nominated by:

- **Chris Arbeene, Senior Organized Retail Crime Manager, Abercrombie & Fitch**
- **Chris DeSantis, Senior Director of Investigations, Macy's**

Always honored and humbled to receive recognition for an investigation the Team below has driven. Truly proud to work with this group of Investigators on this case:

- CHP ORC TF – Southern (Scott Elson, Allan Cohen, Martin Geller, Amy Rodriguez)
- CA AG's Office – Los Angeles (DAG Kristina Gannon, DAG Susan Schwartz)
- Columbia Sportswear – Kevin Stone
- Abercrombie & Fitch – Jason Basco
- JCPenney – Sarven Yaldizciyan
- Lululemon – Andrew Esquivias
- Gap Inc. – Ignacio Rosales
- Macy's – Erik Moreno
- Macy's – Tina McHale

As someone who has had the privilege of founding an ORCA and a professional who has been involved with ORCAs across the country for over a decade, it is always great to see investigations highlighted that bring people together and have a positive effect on the communities that are impacted. In this case, the primary ORC Crew victimized retailers throughout the Western United States by carrying out extremely sophisticated theft operations and threatening violence on a weekly basis. Without strong evidence collected by store employees and AP Team members from all victimized retailers, and without the ability/willingness of several retailers to come together to build on that evidence, the bad guys would have continued to jump jurisdictions and state lines leaving a great deal of damage in their wake, both physically and emotionally.

Of course Law Enforcement should always receive top billing in any investigation and we were lucky enough to capitalize on the relationships we've built with CHP partners even before the ORC Task Forces were formed in California (CHP Cargo Theft Teams have been working ORC cases as far back as 2012-2013 and some of these Investigators are now on the ORC Task Force Teams). As is obvious from the recaps of the case that hit the media back in March 2022, CHP and California DAGs Kristina Gannon and Susan Schwartz did a phenomenal job opening their doors to the retailers, trusting the evidence that was presented, and immediately taking action in a continued investigative partnership with retail investigators. Additionally, the presentation of the learnings from this case have been effective in adding training content to the Spring CHP meeting in Los Angeles, the Summer SDORCA Symposium in San Diego and now the CALORCA Conference. It is this synergy between partners - no matter the organization, agency, private sector or public sector – that truly symbolizes the most effective path forward in the fight against ORC.

[State of California Department of Justice](#)
[U.S. News Report](#)

[L.A. Times Report](#)

As we continue to proceed through additional components of this investigation, we will continue to recognize CHP and the CA AG's Office for their unwavering commitment to further tackle this transnational ORC investigation. And we will continue to be committed to further cultivating the synergy between partners that has been evolving since the first ORCAs were convened over a decade ago to strengthen the community resolve and impact on the ORC front. For, we will never win the ORC fight if we fail to do it together.

Thanks again for the honor of being recognized with this elite group of Investigators, we appreciate it!

Organized Retail Crime Case of the Year Awarded to: City of Redlands Police Department, Riverside County Sheriff's Department and Ulta Beauty

Nominated by: Travis Martinez, Deputy Chief of Police, City of Redlands Police Department

On behalf of law enforcement, thank you for taking the time to recognize outstanding investigative work in the organized retail crime world. As we all know, organized retail crime has been a major problem in most California cities. As a 27 year police executive of law enforcement who has also presented at numerous state, national, and international conferences across the country on how law enforcement agencies can utilize technology to address crime trends, I can personally attest that the key to addressing organized retail crime is through technology.

Redlands, CA is home to two major shopping complexes, both which have stores that are prone to being hit by organized retail crime crews. For several years, the Redlands Police Department (RPD) has taken a very proactive approach to addressing crime trends by utilizing specialized GPS trackers and automated license plate reader (ALPR) technology. White papers discussing RPD's success with these technological deployments have been published in several law enforcement periodicals including Police Chief Magazine, the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, National Police Foundation, and the COPS Office. The results speak volumes: RPD has found a proven and affordable way to put law enforcement in direct contact with those who are intent on committing robberies, burglaries, and thefts.

When the problem of organized retail crime reached Redlands, Staff at RPD once again turned to technology. The following case illustrates how effective GPS tracking and ALPR technology can be when it comes to apprehending those who are intent on driving up the crime rate:

On December 9, 2021, a major department store located in Redlands was a victim of an organized retail crime crew in which five subjects who entered the store carrying backpacks immediately went to the high end fragrances and proceeded to steal \$10,000 worth of merchandise. They fled to an awaiting silver Mercedes which was caught on an automated license plate reader camera (ALPR) leaving the shopping center. A license plate was obtained from the ALPR.

On December 16, 2021, a national beauty supply store located in Redlands (same shopping complex as the department store) was also a victim of the same ORC crew. Two masked subjects who entered the store carrying backpacks immediately went to the high end fragrances

and proceeded to steal \$12,000 worth of merchandise. They fled to what witnesses described to be a silver sedan with no license plate. The officer working the case searched the ALPRs and determined that the silver sedan was actually the same silver Mercedes from the theft on December 9 but this time the Mercedes did not have a license plate on it. Officers were able to determine it was the same vehicle using unique damage depicted on both ALPR images. It is important to note the ALPRs that were installed around and the Redlands Police Department.

During the following week, staff at RPD met with management of two different beauty supply stores to discuss target hardening as RPD suspected the same crew would strike again. One store stated they would be removing the product from the floor. Knowing that the other store had deployed specialized GPS trackers in stores across the country to address organized retail crime, RPD staff offered to deploy the same trackers in the Redlands store at RPD expense. The asset protection specialist informed RPD staff that the company would be deploying their own trackers in the Redlands store as well as installing trackers in other area stores. The AP specialist stated that several other stores in the area have been hit by the same crew. He estimated there were at least 6 people in the crew, and they suspected that they were from the LA area.

Within a week, one of the stores in Perris, CA was hit by the same crew for perfume. They stole a tracker that had been embedded in a fragrance box and law enforcement immediately arrested three subjects in the silver Mercedes as they fled. The GPS tracker led authorities to their exact location, and the Mercedes again did not have a license plate. About \$15K in product was recovered. When law enforcement ran the Vin # to the Mercedes, they determined the license plate belonging to the vehicle was the same license plate that was on the Mercedes depicted on the ALPR when it was involved in the Redlands theft in December 2021. However, the other three crew members including the ringleader were not located or arrested during the Perris incident.

On January 8, 2022, the beauty store in Redlands that had removed their product from the floor was robbed. The reporting party called and stated two suspects entered the store and stole perfume. During the theft, the suspects physically assaulted an employee and fled in a gray Chevrolet Malibu with a sticker over the license plate and a dent on the vehicle. This vehicle was caught on the ALPR cameras as it left the area.

Shortly after that robbery, another beauty supply store located in Jurupa was hit by the same crew. The crew stole several fragrances including one which had a tracker embedded in it. Law enforcement was able to identify a gray Chevy Malibu as the vehicle that was carrying the tracker. Police stopped the vehicle and arrested three subjects. These three subjects were the other half of the ORC crew and included the ringleader. Detectives were able to confirm that the Chevy Malibu was the same Chevy Malibu that was caught on the ALPR cameras leaving the area one minute after the Redlands robbery. All members of the ORC crew were arrested and charged accordingly.

Investigations like this play out on a weekly basis across the country where police departments work in partnership with loss prevention officers and property management companies to install technology that can provide authorities with the tools needed to arrest ORC offenders.

The beauty supply chain that was in Redlands can be a prime example of how this type of technology can put law enforcement in direct contact with those who are intent on committing ORC. Since 2016, the store has made a concerted effort to protect merchandise at stores located within jurisdictions in which there is a working partnership with the local police with

specialized GPS technology that activates upon motion and alerts authorities when it leaves the store. The strategy has paid dividends for the chain. According to stats provided by the GPS tracking company and verified, since 2016, there have been 58 thefts at stores in CA in which a GPS tracking device was also stolen. In those 58 incidents, 134 suspects were involved with a total product amount of \$137,365 being stolen. As a result of using the trackers, 109 suspects were arrested and \$136,159 worth of product was recovered. These numbers calculate to an arrest rate of 81% and a recovery rate of 99%.

When you look at the national strategy, the chain has trackers deployed in stores located in 17 states. During that same time period, there were 209 thefts in which a GPS tracking device was stolen. Out of those 209 crimes, 445 suspects were involved with a total product amount of \$655,129 being stolen. The strategy led to the arrest of 372 suspects and the recovery of \$621,133 worth of product. These numbers calculate to an arrest rate of 84% and a recovery rate of 95%.

Law enforcement nationwide is attempting to get a handle on the ORC problem utilizing the same technology. The State of California just approved funding to address ORC by deploying technology in the amount of \$85M each year for the next three years. Aided by this boost in funding, police in partnership with retail stores will not only be able to purchase GPS trackers, they will also be able to install ALPR technology around shopping centers that are prone to organized retail crime. With the addition of ALPR technology, law enforcement will now have the ability to connect ORC incidents much like the Redlands Police Department did in the Inland Empire case.

Technology is the key to addressing the ORC problem. Technology is working 24/7 to provide protection for retail stores. The aforementioned case can serve as a template for other police departments to follow and is certainly deserving of being recognized as the ORC investigative case of the year.

Organized Retail Crime Prosecutor of the Year Awarded to: San Diego County Deputy District Attorney Anna Winn

Nominated by: Richard C. Anderson, Investigator, San Diego District Attorney's Office

[Hartford Courant Feature](#)

Read more about DDA Winn's nomination [here](#).

Organized Retail Crime Law Enforcement Investigator of the Year Awarded to: City of Simi Valley Police Department Detective James Dykes

Nominated by: The Home Depot's Senior Manager of Asset Protection Investigations Rory Stallard

Det. James Dykes of the Simi Valley Police Department has been instrumental in combating ORC at The Home Depot stores across Southern California. Det. Dykes leaves no stone unturned and exhausts all avenues to get the suspects arrested and in jail. Dykes aggressive game plans allow for a complete investigation from the identification of boosters to the arrest of

the fence. This is highlighted by a case Dykes worked in which over \$300k in power tools were recovered from a fencing operation in Orange County. Dykes utilized GPS trackers and surveillance to establish a pattern of thefts and following the stolen merchandise to a fencing location. Dykes has worked numerous cases with the Home Depot ORC team and utilized multiple tactics including GPS trackers, cell phone pings, criminal history search and active surveillance. Dykes has been a great asset and partner to the Home Depot ORC team in Southern California.