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SFPD Chief Bill Scott praises Gov. Newsom, legislature for today's reauthorization of Organized Retail Crime Task Force 21-140

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Sophisticated criminal enterprises fueling brazen retail thefts require ‘a no less sophisticated response from law enforcement agencies, working in close coordination,’ SFPD Chief says

LONG BEACH, Calif. (July 21, 2021) — Following a news conference with Governor Gavin Newsom and state and local leaders and law enforcement officials from across California this morning, San Francisco Chief of

Police William Scott issued the following statement in response to the governor’s signing of Assembly Bill 331 into law.

“The brazen retail thefts we’ve seen in San Francisco recently are fueled by sophisticated criminal enterprises that require a no less sophisticated response from law enforcement agencies, working in close coordination,” said SFPD Chief Bill Scott. “These crimes don’t just hurt retailers. In my city, they also hurt seniors who depend on neighborhood pharmacies that are being forced to shutter. They hurt workers who are seeing their hours cut and jobs eliminated by employers struggling to cope.

“The organized retail crime rings and individuals stealing on their behalf must be held accountable — and the newly reauthorized Organized Retail Crime Task Force will help my department and all of our partners statewide do exactly that.

“On behalf of all of us in the San Francisco Police Department, we’re grateful to Governor Gavin Newsom for his leadership on the issue of retail theft and his support of law enforcement officers. Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer deserves special thanks from us as well for authoring and championing AB 331 to re-establish this task force, which has been so enormously successful for us in the Bay Area, until 2026. Finally, we’re also thankful to our partners in the California Highway Patrol, the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office, and police and sheriffs’ departments and prosecutors across the state. Together, we’re sending a strong and unified message — that there is no place for organized retail crime in California.”

The San Francisco Police Department’s role in tandem with the California Highway Patrol’s Organized Retail Crime Task Force has been instrumental in operations that have recovered millions of dollars in stolen merchandise and cash from criminal enterprises engaged in retail theft activities. These operations include an \$8 million seizure led by the San Mateo Sheriff’s Office on Sept. 30, 2020, in which cooperating law enforcement agencies recovered stolen merchandise from such San Francisco Bay Area retailers like CVS, Target, and Walgreens.

According to the California Highway Patrol’s Organized Retail Crime Task Force data published in a recent California Retailers Association and the California Organized Retail Crime Association (Cal-ORCA) fact sheet, CHP’s Organized Retail Crime Task Force in 2020 led 135 investigations and assisted in another 307 investigations statewide. The task force also assisted law enforcement agencies, including the San Francisco Police Department, in recovering more than \$10 million in stolen retail assets statewide in 2020.

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