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Stolen Car Used in Smash-and-Grab Gun Heist, Teen and Juveniles Caught After Chase

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— Categories: *Crime*



A group of young suspects, including a 19-year-old man and three juveniles, were arrested on Saturday after crashing a stolen vehicle into a Laguna Niguel gun store and making off with firearms and ammunition before leading deputies on a high-speed chase through Orange County.

According to the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD), the incident began just after 3:20 a.m. when a Hyundai Sonata was deliberately driven through the front of Saddleback Valley Gun Center, located at 27601 Forbes Road. The crash, which witnesses reported to

911, allowed the suspects to break into the store and steal a firearm, two pellet guns, and multiple rounds of ammunition before escaping in a second stolen vehicle, a Kia Rio.

Deputies arrived on the scene within five minutes of the initial call and quickly determined the suspects had left behind the crashed Hyundai. A short time later, around 4 a.m., authorities located the stolen Kia and initiated a pursuit that ended in the city of Tustin. Several units from OCSD assisted in the arrest of all four suspects.

The 19-year-old, a resident of Tustin, was booked on multiple charges including burglary, conspiracy, vandalism, possession of a stolen vehicle, and unlawful open carry of a firearm inside a vehicle. His bail was set at \$20,000. The three juveniles involved were not publicly identified due to their age, but were also taken into custody following the pursuit.

Lt. Matt Timmins with OCSD confirmed the arrests and credited the quick response and coordinated efforts of deputies with preventing further danger to the community.

Gun Theft Pattern

Saturday's burglary is part of a growing concern over coordinated gun store break-ins across Southern California. Just last summer, a similar incident in the city of Orange involved suspects using a stolen vehicle to ram into a gun shop, leading to the theft of 70 firearms. That case led to the arrest of six individuals believed to be involved in a wider ring of heists spanning multiple cities, including Murrieta, Poway, Oceanside, Riverside, and Camarillo. Authorities also connected the group to attempted thefts in Ontario, Fallbrook, and Simi Valley.

In total, over 300 firearms were reported stolen in that investigation, raising alarm among law enforcement officials who warned of the dangers posed when high-powered weapons fall into the hands of criminals through organized retail burglaries.

Authorities have not yet confirmed whether Saturday's incident is tied to those previous burglaries, but the method and target raise serious concerns.

OCSD continues to investigate the latest break-in, and federal partners may be brought in to assess if any federal firearms laws were violated.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has been actively involved in prior investigations of similar crimes and may assist in tracking the stolen weapons,

especially if any are later recovered during unrelated arrests or raids.

Any additional information is urged to contact the Orange County Sheriff's Department.