

Gang rape suspects using social media make court appearances

Photos of seven of eight suspects released by Santa Paula Police Department



Isaac Ek

Carlos Ek

Dion Mendoza

Esteban Oseguera

Jonathan Gaona

Joseph Sandoval

Adrian Garcia

By Peggy Kelly
Santa Paula Times

A series of warrant searches Friday led to this week's court appearances of seven area men charged with multiple crimes including gang rape, as well as a eighth man charged with an attempted murder.

Seven were charged Tuesday in connection with the alleged gang rapes of two teenage girls, both 15, one a Santa Paula resident and the other living in Oxnard, who had contact with some of the suspects on a social networking site. In fact, according to Santa Paula Police Sgt. Ishmael Cordero, the warrant searches Friday probably prevented a third girl from being raped.

Santa Paula residents Robert Alamillo, 17; Isaac Ek, 19; Esteban Oseguera, 18; Adrian Garcia, 19; Joseph Sandoval, 18; Dion

Mendoza, 19; and Jonathan Gaona, 20, were arrested Friday following a six-week investigation of two separate gang rapes.

And the suspects themselves are affiliated with gangs: Mendoza and Gaona are allegedly members of the Cabrillo Village gang of Ventura, while Oseguera, Ek,

Santa Paulans face a variety of charges in alleged gang rapes

By Peggy Kelly
Santa Paula Times

The seven Santa Paulans who appeared in court Tuesday in connection with the alleged gang rapes of two teenage girls at an area residence face a variety of charges.

Santa Paula residents Robert Alamillo, 17; Isaac Ek, 19; Esteban Oseguera, 18; Adrian Garcia, 19; Joseph Sandoval, 18; Dion Mendoza, 19; and Jonathan

Sandoval and Carlos Ek are members of All Stone Krew (ASK), a tagging crew that, according to police officials, turned violent. Alamillo was described as an ASK affiliate.

Carlos Ek, 21, also of Santa Paula, is not charged in the same case as the other defendants, but

Gaona, 20, were arrested Friday following a six-week investigation of two separate gang rapes involving 15-year-old girls, one a local resident and the other from Oxnard, both who connected with the suspects on an online social networking site.

After a week or so of communication, one of the girls was picked up in March and the other in April by one of the suspects who allegedly took them

was booked into Ventura County jail on suspicion of attempted murder and other charges.

The suspects were charged with a variety of crimes, ranging from rape and mayhem - allegedly forcibly tattooing one of the rape victims - to conspiracy and unlawful sex with a minor. All to a Santa Paula residence where they were provided with alcohol and were raped by multiple suspects.

The suspects, most of whom are described as members of the Cabrillo Village gang or the ASK, All Stone Crew gang, were charged with a variety of crimes, ranging from rape and mayhem - one victim was allegedly forcibly

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appeared in Ventura County Superior Court and pleaded not guilty, except Alamillo, whose arraignment was continued.

Cordero said the SPPD started investigating on April 16 when a rape was reported. "Then we found we had two separate incidents" when the investigation discovered another girl had been raped "a couple of weeks prior" to the reported April incident. Investigators received anonymous information that another girl had been raped under similar circumstances, and "We found the victim."

Cordero said the suspects were "all involved in the crimes, mix and match," with investigators working to determine who might have been involved in both alleged incidents. Both incidents occurred at the same suspect's Santa Paula residence.

The suspects, said Cordero, connected with the victims on a social networking site, "messed back and forth for a week or two," and then convinced them to come to the Santa Paula home.

One of the girls accepted the invitation to a party after meeting one of the suspects online, and Cordero said the other girl knew one of the suspects through school, and was assaulted at the home after she was invited to visit and "hang out." One of the suspects picked up both victims and brought them to the residence, where they were supplied with alcohol.

Based on the investigation, Cordero said the victims "drank until they passed in and out of consciousness" during the sexual assaults. But, he added,

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Open house officially recognizes completion of Water Recycling Facility



By Peggy Kelly
Santa Paula Times

PERC Water founder CEO Johan Perslow said each plant built by the company gets better, but Santa Paula's "is the best," a statement typical of the remarks at Thursday's grand opening of the water recycling facility. Good work and working together is what quality is all about, and Perslow said the most important team member is the client.

Earlier in the day the public had been invited to tour the \$62 million facility located just south of the city's now defunct - and no longer funky - old wastewater treatment plant. The city's plant, built in 1939, had been unable to keep up with changing environmental mandates, and in 2003 the city found it was facing millions in fines for polluted discharges into the Santa Clara River.

The new facility is owned by Santa Paula Water LLC, a partnership between PERC and Alinda Capital Partners, and was constructed under the Design/Build/Operate/Finance model. According to Brian Cullen, president of PERC Water, the facility is the first water treatment facility in the nation in a public-private partnership.

Philip Dyk, co-founder and partner of the New York-based Alinda, said Santa Paula reminds him of his Salinas hometown. The city wanted the best, and as "proud partners," Dyk said, the Santa Paula facility continues to win awards and is "a showcase for us."

Other speakers addressed various aspects of the financing and construction of the plant, completed four months before the September 2010 deadline and fully certified by the state in December. The plant is now treating wastewater for the city's approximately 30,000 residents; the plant was built for future expansion and Santa Paula's projected build-out of 50,000 residents.

"I've been in Santa Paula most of my life," and Mayor Fred Robinson said the odor from the

old wastewater treatment facility was a continuing problem. But a bigger problem was the polluting discharges that the city learned in 2003 could result in millions in fines from the state Regional Water Quality Control Board. A settlement was reached where the city could apply more than \$8 million in fines to a new facility.

Robinson said after years of study the council decided to enter into a DBOF agreement, resulting in the new plant with a water feature in front of the compact facility. "There is no odor," and the treatment process chambers sit below the "aesthetically attractive" facility. Now, treated water is discharged into percolation ponds to help recharge the aquifers.

Robinson noted he was not yet on the council when the decision was made to award the contract to the PERC-Alinda partnership Santa Paula Water. But he said Vice Mayor Bob Gonzales, at the time the contract was let, was the city's mayor and was "intimately involved" in the process.

Robinson said Gonzales, who was unable to attend, had just called and said Robinson should stress the "public private partnership" forged that resulted in the facility. "It's a great day for PERC, a great day for Alinda and," said Robinson, "a great day for the City of Santa Paula."

Santa Paula was under the gun to get the plant built: the groundbreaking for the facility, with a \$125.5 million cost spread over 30 years, occurred July 2008, a week before the court ordered start date of July 15. The city has a buyback option for the plant.

Councilman Ralph Fernandez was also on hand at the grand opening, as was former City Engineer Cliff Finley, who served as the project manager for the new facility and former Mayor Ray Luna, a councilman at the time the contract was finalized. Councilman Mike Morgan of Camarillo and Martin Hernandez, representing Supervisor Kathy Long, were also among those attending the open house.

The new Water Recycling Facility is owned by Santa Paula Water LLC, a partnership between PERC and Alinda Capital Partners and was constructed under the Design/Build/Operate/Finance model. According to (right) Brian Cullen, president of PERC Water, the facility is the first water treatment facility in the nation in a public-private partnership. The plant is now treating wastewater for the city's approximately 30,000 residents; the plant was built for future expansion and Santa Paula's projected build-out of 50,000 residents. Above, the Santa Paula Chamber of Commerce conducts an official ribbon cutting with Mayor Fred Robinson, PERC Representatives, and Chamber members. Left, Brian Cullen talks about the new facility.