

LOCAL REPORTS

CRIME

Man gets 4 years, 6 months in prison for smuggling \$1.77M worth of cocaine

SAN DIEGO

A scuba diver who tried to smuggle \$1.77 million worth of cocaine into the United States through a canal near Calexico was sentenced Monday to four years and six months in custody.

Evelio Padilla Zepeda of Mexicali pleaded guilty in San Diego federal court last year to one count of possession of drugs with intent to distribute. Padilla is a citizen of Honduras.

He was arrested April 25 after Border Patrol agents spotted suspicious activity near the All-American Canal, about seven miles east of the Calexico Port of Entry, according to court documents.

Agents found Padilla in a soaking wet suit and located scuba gear and 55 pounds of cocaine contained in 25 shrink-wrapped packages, authorities said. The scuba tanks used technology that circulated the diver's exhaled air to prevent bubbles from giving away the diver's position.

Border Patrol authorities said three other men fled back across the border.

An investigation led agents to discover an underwater tunnel that started at a home in Mexicali and exited into the canal. The entrance to the tunnel was covered by rocks.

The dry part of the tunnel included a rail system.

Padilla told investigators he was paid \$700 to help transport three people from one side of the canal to the other and was given a wet suit to wear, according to the

complaint.

He jumped over the international boundary fence, found the waiting scuba gear and then was told he'd be transporting packages instead.

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Former sixth-grade teacher gets prison for child porn

SAN DIEGO

A former Chula Vista elementary school substitute teacher convicted of a child pornography charge was sentenced Monday to seven years in federal prison, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

Alejandro Castillo Jr., 36, pleaded guilty in September to one count of receiving child pornography, admitting he collected photos and videos of minors as young as 6 involved in sexual acts with adults, including bondage and degradation.

U.S. District Judge Michael M. Anello said at the sentencing hearing that Castillo's actions were "higher on the scale" of child pornography cases because he was in a position of trust with children, had collected the pornography over a long period of time and communicated with minors online about sexual activities, according to a news release from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Castillo was assigned to a sixth-grade class at Los Altos Elementary School at the time of his arrest. He previously held other positions at various youth camps and

schools.

Homeland Security began an investigation into Castillo when investigators found he was sharing child pornography videos online last March, according to the complaint filed in San Diego federal court.

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Man arrested after disabling parked Amtrak locomotive

SAN DIEGO

A man slipped onto an Amtrak locomotive and pulled out some control panel wires, disabling it, before he was arrested at the downtown Santa Fe Depot on Monday, officials said.

Electricians were able to re-connect the wires and the engine was back in use Tuesday morning, Amtrak spokeswoman Vernae Graham said.

Graham said the train was not moving at the time the man got onboard and the engine was an extra one being stored on side tracks.

Several Amtrak employees held the man until San Diego police officers arrived and arrested him about 5:10 p.m.

Amtrak and Burlington Northern Santa Fe police officers patrol the depot, but it was unclear if any of those officers were on hand at the time.

Ahmed Ali Parr, 22, was booked on suspicion of vandalism, trespassing on railroad property and tampering with railroad equipment.

Arrest records show Parr has been arrested twice before by San Diego police and once by sheriff's deputies since September. A District Attorney's Office spokesman said Parr pleaded guilty on Feb. 11 to a misdemeanor in a December case involving robbery, assault, burglary and probation violation.

A separate burglary case was referred to the City Attorney's Office for prosecution.

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Pursuit suspect tracked down to outhouse, arrested

OCEANSIDE

Oceanside police spent nearly two hours early Tuesday tracking a pursuit suspect who ditched his car on Sleeping Indian Road and was hiding in a strawberry field portable outhouse when a sheriff's dog sniffed him out.

Police found out later that a passenger in the car, who also was taken into custody, was alleged to have held a man hostage in a trailer for several hours before the chase started.

Officers found two semi-automatic pistols and a shotgun in the car, police Lt. Taurino Valdovinos said.

An Oceanside officer who knew nothing about the kidnapping tried to pull over the driver for a traffic violation on Calle Los Santos, near Libby Lake, about 3:30 a.m.

Instead of stopping, the driver led police on a pursuit up North

River Road to Sleeping Indian Road, north of Morro Heights Road.

The car went off the road and the driver ran into an agricultural area of groves and fields. The passenger stayed in the car and was arrested, Valdovinos said.

California Highway Patrol officers and sheriff's deputies helped Oceanside officers surround the area as they searched for the fugitive driver. A deputy from the Fallbrook station used his dog to track the man.

The scent led them to a portable outhouse in a field off Wilshire Road. The man wouldn't come out, so the dog was used to help get him into custody about 5:30 a.m., Oceanside police Sgt. Tom Wayer said.

The dog bit the man several times and he was taken to a hospital for treatment.

Police said that during the search, a man called police to report having been held hostage in a friend's trailer off Sleeping Indian Road near North River Road.

The victim told officers that he was held at gunpoint for several hours by a stranger armed with a shotgun and pistol, Valdovinos said. Eventually the gunman left, getting into the passenger seat of the car later involved in the pursuit. The victim, who wasn't injured, ran off and called police about a half hour later.

A motive for the hostage-taking wasn't known, Valdovinos said.

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COURTS

P.F. Chang's faces new sex harassment cases

Less than two years after two San Diego County employees were awarded about \$1 million in a sexual harassment case against P.F. Chang's China Bistro, Inc., the company is facing a new wave of litigation brought by women who worked at restaurants in Southern California.

Two women who worked at P.F. Chang's restaurants in Carlsbad and La Jolla were awarded nearly \$500,000 each in arbitration against the company in 2014. They claimed they were repeatedly sexually harassed.

Since then, at least four more women have filed arbitration claims against the company, saying they were sexually harassed at restaurants in Anaheim, Chino Hills, Beverly Hills and Riverside.

Their San Diego law firm, Hogue & Belong, also is representing a fifth woman who was 16 years old when she signed on with P.F. Chang's in Beverly Hills in 2012. Her case is proceeding in a Los Angeles court. During her two years of employment, the young woman says she was harassed and sexually assaulted. She was fired in 2014.

P.F. Chang's provided a statement in response to The San Diego Union-Tribune's request for comment: "While we can't comment on pending litigation, we can tell you that P.F. Chang's is committed to providing a workplace free of any type of unlawful harassment or discrimination."

Tyler J. Belong, one of the women's attorneys, said the new round of claims is alarming.

"To me it suggests that P.F. Chang's hasn't done anything sufficient to clean up their act," Belong said. "I wouldn't have expected one, let alone five, women to come forward with this same type of sexual harassment claim."

According to complaints filed on behalf of the five women, supervisors and co-workers subjected them to unwanted sexual attention, simulated sex with them, tried to kiss them, and touched them inappropriately.

Each of the women said they reported the behavior, but the restaurant did nothing to correct or punish the male perpetrators, and instead reduced the women's hours or transferred them to restaurants up to three hours from their homes, their complaints allege.

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GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Ex-councilman Harris enters race for mayor

SAN DIEGO

Democrat Ed Harris, lifeguard union chief and once an interim City Council member, plans to run for mayor against incumbent Republican Kevin Faulconer, according to the City Clerk's Office.

Harris, who filed papers declaring his intent Tuesday, expands the field, which currently includes former Assemblywoman Lori Saldaña, a Democrat-turned-independent, and a few other relatively unknown candidates. If both Harris and Saldaña remain in the race, the potential increases for Faulconer to be pushed into a November runoff.

He could win re-election outright if he gains a majority of votes in the June 7 election.

The mayor had been perceived as so politically strong that the local Democratic Party could not attract any high-profile Democratic officeholders to run. Past polls show the Republican mayor with strong approval ratings in a city where Democrats have a significant advantage in voter registration.

Among those Democratic names that surfaced but did not make a move to run: City Councilman Todd Gloria, who is running for the Assembly; outgoing Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, who is running for state Senate; Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, who is running for reelection; and Councilman David Alvarez, who lost to Faulconer in a special election in 2014.

Harris some time ago had announced he was running for the 78th Assembly District being vacated by Atkins due to term limits. But when Gloria got in the race, it was clear who top Democrats would back, and Harris dropped out.

After Faulconer was elected, Harris was named to fill his council seat for the less than a year remaining on the term, under the condition that he not run in the coming election.

Faulconer, who has raised more than \$1 million for his re-election campaign, has spent considerable time pursuing policies aimed at helping many under-served and often economically challenged Democratic neighborhoods south of Interstate 8.

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HEALTH

Event set Saturday for Alzheimer's caregivers

LA JOLLA

For those caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease, a primary focus is the heartbreak of memory loss.

The reality of dementia is that it's also accompanied by personality shifts, mood swings, depression, pain, loss of mobility and decline in cognitive ability. Preparing family caregivers for these and other changes is the subject of a free half-day conference in La Jolla Saturday.

Jointly presented by Alzheimer's San Diego and Scripps Health, the event features experts who'll address what caregivers can expect as the disease progresses and ways to cope with the changes.

Speaking at the conference will be Dr. Holly Yang, a hospice and palliative medicine specialist at Scripps Health; Amy Abrams, education and outreach manager for Alzheimer's San Diego; and Mary Ball, president and CEO of Alzheimer's San Diego.

"This conference is going to focus on issues well beyond memory loss — sleep, falling, loss of appetite, pain, how can you tell if the person with memory loss is in pain and they can't communicate it, and more," Ball said.

"These are the tough subjects that caregivers have to learn how to manage on a daily basis. These are the things that are so challenging for (caregivers)."

An estimated 62,000 San Diegans are living with Alzheimer's or other dementia; the number of caregivers tops 150,000.

Those with Alzheimer's can experience a range of changes, including feeling withdrawn or confused, trouble controlling bladder or bowels, an increased risk of wandering, delusions, paranoia, compulsive, repetitive behavior, increasing need for assistance with routine activities and personal care and even loss of the ability to swallow.

Details: 9 a.m. to noon Saturday; registration begins at 8 a.m. Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla Schaezel Center, 9888 Genesee Ave., La Jolla. Free on-site respite care will be available. Register online at bit.ly/1LTqVTP or by phone at (858) 492-4400.

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EDUCATION

City, schools announce job plan collaboration

SAN DIEGO

Leaders from the city of San Diego, high-tech industries and area schools announced Tuesday a multi-tiered collaborative plan to increase the workforce and add more opportunities for communities under-represented in high-paying fields.

"We're helping to set a national model for how to build a strong economy where every resident has the skills to work in our innovation economy," San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer said in a news conference at Qualcomm Thinkabit Lab, a high-tech education wing at the company's headquarters.

Faulconer said the plan calls for businesses to create more internships and for the San Diego Unified School District and San Diego Community College District to create "bridge programs" to help graduating high school seniors prepare for working in highly paid growing industries.

The plan also would encourage businesses to expand in under-served communities by offering incentives such as expedited permitting and waived fees and taxes.

Faulconer said the city also will collaborate with the San Diego Workforce Partnership to prioritize federal funds to areas with the most employment growth.

Speakers at the Tuesday news conference include San Diego Unified School District Superintendent Cindy Marten.

"We know our challenge as a school system is to prepare our students for the workforce they're going to enter upon graduation," she said. "STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and early interventions are critical components of making this work successful."

The plan includes replicating the Thinkabit Lab at five sites. In December, Qualcomm introduced mini versions of the lab at middle schools in San Diego, Chula Vista and Vista. On Tuesday, Marten announced that Thinkabit Lab would be the model of its new partnerships with SeaWorld and Raytheon. Faulconer said field trips to the labs sometimes provide students with their first visions of what careers they may work in someday.

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NORTH COUNTY

Blakespear will run for mayor of Encinitas

ENCINITAS

Encinitas Councilwoman Catherine Blakespear has announced that she's running for mayor.

Blakespear, an attorney and a fourth-generation Encinitas resident, was elected to the City Council in 2014. She announced her mayoral candidacy Saturday during her 40th birthday party.

"I think that you can be more effective as the mayor," said Blakespear, who has two more years remaining in her term. "The mayor can set the council's agenda and provide the type of leadership that directs the city in a particular direction."

She's the first in Encinitas to announce her candidacy, though the November election is expected to generate a large field. Due to the shift to an elected mayor system in 2014, three City Council spots are up for grabs, as well as the mayor's post, which is a two-year term.

Kristin Gaspar, the city's current mayor, announced last summer that she was running for the county supervisor seat now held by Dave Roberts, a Democrat whose election bid is considered vulnerable. In addition to Gaspar, fellow Republican Sam Abed — the mayor of Escondido — also is seeking the supervisor's spot.

Blakespear is typically considered part of the Encinitas City Council's majority — along with Councilman Tony Kranz and Lisa Shaffer — though she has been a swing vote, joining Gaspar and Councilman Mark Muir at times.

She supported the city's purchase of the former Pacific View Elementary School property; has backed the east side route for the Cardiff rail trail project; and has campaigned for Encinitas to establish an urban agriculture ordinance. The agriculture ordinance, which has been in production for many months, has become a battleground because its backers have sought to ease city restrictions on bee keeping and livestock on residential properties.

Blakespear said that if she's elected mayor, she will view city issues through "an environmental lens," promoting recycling at the beach and helping improve pedestrian routes to the city's schools. She praised Gaspar's capabilities as mayor.

Barbara Henry is a freelance writer in Encinitas.

SCIENCE

Scripps director tapped to advise as U.S. envoy

SAN DIEGO

Margaret Leinen, the director of UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, will serve as a special science adviser to Latin America, East Asia and the Pacific at the request of the U.S. State Department.

Leinen was one of five renowned scientists who were named U.S. Science Envoys, a position that involves conferring with governments and citizens internationally on a variety of issues.

She'll carry out the position while remaining director of Scripps.

Leinen is an award-winning oceanographer who will focus on marine issues. Her research has mostly been in paleo-oceanography and climatology.

During her more than 40-year career, Leinen also has gained broad administrative and policy experience. Last December, she led Scripps' delegation to the Paris Climate Change Accord conference.

She also served as an executive at the National Science Foundation, overseeing a budget of \$700 million.

"Margaret will bring a unique perspective and collaborative spirit to enhance science policy and global cooperation," UC San Diego President Pradeep Khosla said in a statement.

"We are excited that she will represent the national scientific community, as well as UC San Diego."

Science Envoys travel as private citizens and help inform the White House, the Department of State and the scientific community about potential opportunities for cooperation, according to UC San Diego.

"I'm extremely proud to serve as a science envoy for the United States, and I look forward to advancing the understanding and protection of our world, which is in every country's interest," said Leinen.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to serve as an ambassador for the oceans, backed by solution-based science to meet the challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead for our planet."

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