

Local & Region

QUOTE OF NOTE

“I was really impressed with the exhibits and the programs.”

Jack Terrazas, District 2 supervisor, on the Imperial Valley Desert Museum

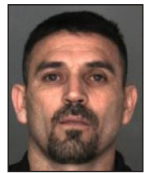
QUESTIONS? Contact Managing Editor Mario Renteria at mrenteria@ivpressonline.com or 760-337-3453.

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Operation to target immigrant smuggling corridor

BY JULIO MORALES
Staff Writer

EASTERN SAN DIEGO COUNTY — A substantial surge in U.S. Border Patrol assets and manpower will be concentrated in eastern portions of San Diego County and the western edge of Imperial County as part of an effort to shut down an immigrant smuggling corridor frequently used by a reputed smuggler that is being sought in connection with an assault of a San Diego Sector Border Patrol agent on Nov. 15 in Jacumba.



Valencia-Cortez

The operation will concentrate its efforts on the apprehension and arrest of 39-year-old Martel Valencia-Cortez, a Mexican national, who is a previously convicted immigrant smuggler who had recently been released from prison, according to a Border Patrol press release.

Agents from the El Centro Sector, as well as local, state, federal and Mexican law enforcement partners will assist in the operation, the press release stated.

The multiagency operation will also focus on known associates of Valencia-Cortez, or anyone who is suspected of harboring him. Recently, agents dis-

covered that Valencia-Cortez is allegedly affiliated with a lieutenant in the Sinaloa Cartel known as “El Tigre,” the press release stated.

Valencia-Cortez is alleged to have struck a Border Patrol agent in the face with a thrown rock on Nov. 15, as he was leading a group of immigrants into the country illegally, authorities had stated. The Border Patrol agent had fired his service weapon multiple times during that altercation at Valencia-Cortez, who is believed to not have been injured.

Valencia-Cortez is described as posing a unique threat to public safety due to his propensity for violence and his complete disregard for human life, the press release stated. He is notorious for carrying a firearm and goes to great lengths to escape apprehension, including driving the wrong way on freeways, the press release stated.

Valencia-Cortez is described as 5-foot-11, 205 pounds, with black hair, brown eyes and a tattoo on his right shoulder. He is considered to be armed and dangerous. Any information regarding Valencia-Cortez can be reported to the San Diego Sector Border Intelligence Center at 619-216-4180.

IMPERIAL REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY

Detention facility earns accreditation

STAFF REPORT

The Imperial Regional Detention Facility was recently recommended for accreditation by the American Correctional Association, according to a press release from Management & Training Corporation, which manages the facility.

The IRDF had been found compliant in nearly 400 expected practices ranging from financial oversight to security measures, the press release stated.

IRDF Warden John Rathman praised the performance of the facility’s staff, and noted the ACA accreditation reinforces the facility’s commitment to providing a safe, secure and environmentally sound environment for those in its custody, the press release stated.

Founded in 1870 as the National Prison Association, ACA is the oldest association developed specifically for the correctional profession, and has championed the cause of corrections and correctional effectiveness, the press release stated.

CALIFORNIA BRIEFS

NAPA
Native American remains found at Napa River restoration

Officials in Napa are determining next steps after workers discovered Native American remains while completing a nine-mile river restoration project.

The Napa Valley Register reports crews uncovered the remains two months ago while working on a \$21 million project to restore the Napa River with native plants and flood plains.

Public Works director Steven Lederer says “significant amounts” of remains were found. He added the finding wasn’t especially surprising given the area’s history. Native American tribes including the Wappo are believed to have lived for thousands of years in the Napa Valley.

County supervisors have allocated more than \$115,000 for consultants to analyze and preserve the remains and another \$128,000 to survey nearby areas.

LONG BEACH
4 fishermen plucked from Pacific after boat capsizes

Four fishermen have been rescued after their boat capsized, tossing the men into the frigid Pacific Ocean waters off the Southern California coast.

KNBC reports the men were four miles off the coast of Long Beach early Wednesday when their 18-foot power boat overturned.

The men clung to the side of their boat for more than an hour as they waited for someone to find them. They say they tried to stay warm and positive.

Someone on a tanker boat eventually noticed them and called for help.

Aerial footage of the rescue shows a lifeguard straddling the bottom of the capsized boat. Long Beach Fire Department marine safety captain Scott Dixon called the men’s ordeal and rescue “a scary moment.”

— The Associated Press

GEOLOGY OF THE IMPERIAL VALLEY



District 2 Supervisor Jack Terrazas takes a look at one of the new exhibits at the Desert Museum.

New exhibits on display at Desert Museum

BY EDWIN DELGADO
Staff Writer

The first two phases of the ongoing renovations at the Imperial Valley Desert Museum have been finalized, while the design and planning third and final stage will begin next month.

The first two phases of the renovations included exhibits that focus on archeology and how people have adapted to life in the Valley and the history of the region.

Curator at the Desert Museum Anne Morgan said museum staff will work with the designing company to begin to plan the third and final stage in December.

“The focus of the third exhibit is going to be the geology of the Imperial Valley,” Morgan said. “We’re hopeful that once the design is designed it could be done within six months.”

Earlier in the week District 2 Supervisor Jack Terrazas visited the museum to get a firsthand look at the newly installed exhibits and was pleased with the work that the museum staff has done.

“I was really impressed with the exhibits and the programs,” Terrazas said. “They have a lot of information about the history, archeology and the water history of the county. I really liked the way it was set up.”

On Sept. 16, 2014, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors voted to fund two components of an overall redesign of the museum which was the phase that was recently completed. The total cost of the project including the portion funded by the county is just above \$1 million.



Terrazas at the reception area of the museum. COURTESY PHOTOS

“These new exhibits are huge for the museum. We’re really excited about them,” Morgan said.

The two exhibits that were funded through the county are titled the Welcome and Visitor’s Service Area and the Power of Imperial County.

The Welcome and Visitor’s Service Area is a reception area for museum visitors as they enter the facility. At the reception area, visitors can receive information regarding places to eat, things to see and other tourist information.

The Power of Imperial County exhibit contains short media presentations about the resources of Imperial County, including statistics on farming, renewable energy production and natural history of the environment.

According to Morgan the idea of the upgrades to the museum came from museum director Neal Hitch, who was hired in 2011.

“Dr. Hitch has really pushed to have permanent exhibits and now the kids have the opportunity to

see things that were only available in museums in San Diego,” Morgan said. “The modules are very interactive and the kids are excited to learn about the history and the culture of the Valley.”

Terrazas said that the enhancing of the museum is very beneficial for the community especially for the schools which are now making more frequent field trips to the museum to allow the local children to learn more about the history of their county.

“The museum is a great informational resource for individuals who want to know more about the history of Imperial County,” Terrazas said. “The interactive modules that they have in place are impressive, especially that they have the ability to update or change them to different themes or topics.”

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum is open to the public from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

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TYPICALLY WRITTEN IN CORDIAL TONE

City considers ‘john letters’ to fight prostitution

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A Los Angeles City Hall proposal to send “john letters” to the owners of cars seen in areas known for prostitution has drawn criticism from a California civil liberties group.

The City Council voted Wednesday to have the city attorney’s office analyze the proposal to use license numbers to determine who owns the vehicles.

The letters would be written to discourage those who were soliciting prostitutes from returning to the area while posing no harm to those who were

there for legitimate reasons, Councilwoman Nury Martinez said.

“If you aren’t soliciting, you have no reason to worry about finding one of these letters in your mailbox,” she said.

The collection of license plate data is opposed by the nonprofit Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Los Angeles Daily News reported.

The San Francisco-based foundation has an ongoing lawsuit against the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department over the issue.

“What happens if you have legitimate reason to be in a neighborhood?” asked Dave Mass, an investigative researcher with Foundation.

Some other cities have used “john letters” to combat prostitution. In some communities, residents are encouraged to jot down the license numbers of cars they see engaging in suspicious activity and provide it to police.

The “john letters” are typically written in a cordial tone and make it clear that police do not assume the owner of the vehicle was the person driving it.

“It is a common myth that prostitution is a ‘victimless crime’ or that it is ‘an act between two consenting adults,’” one sample letter used by a police agency in Florida states. “Prostitution is a crime which is linked to drugs (use and sale), acts of violence toward prostitutes and their customers, and in the worst case, human trafficking in juveniles for the sex trade.”

The letters also warn about potential exposure to sexually transmitted diseases.

Some business owners praised the proposal in Los Angeles.