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COVID-19 Hasn't Slowed Need for GVROs *Preventing gun violence a priority for City Attorney, police, courts*

Emergency measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus have not affected the need for Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs) in San Diego, or the ability of law enforcement agencies to respond quickly to remove firearms from individuals who threaten to harm themselves or others, City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said today.

The City Attorney's Office obtained 26 GVROs during the month of March, and 20 more within in the first 10 days of April, a time in which the effects of the coronavirus pandemic were growing, a state of emergency was declared, and San Diegans began to shelter in place, first voluntarily and then under an executive order issued by Gov. Newsom.

Although San Diego courts are closed for much of their traditional business, Presiding Judge Alksne, in an order dated March 18, prioritized protecting the public by continuing to hear GVROs sought by the City Attorney's Office.

"Law enforcement is taking threats of violence during this pandemic very seriously and dangerous behavior will not be excused as an unavoidable result of intense anxiety or confinement to close quarters," San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **"If you or a loved one are threatened by a person who has access to firearms, please contact the police immediately."**

Many recent GVRO cases involve domestic violence and mental health issues including multiple threats of suicide. In one case, a man was arrested on charges of beating his girlfriend, who was eight months pregnant, in front of their toddler.

The City Attorney's Office works in tandem with the San Diego Police Department and the courts to ensure GVROs are used to remove firearms from dangerous individuals.

"The San Diego Police Department is an essential partner in our effort to prevent gun violence tragedies," Elliott said. **"We're grateful to Chief Nisleit and all of the officers who are working on the front lines to protect San Diegans during this public health crisis."**

Recent GVRO cases include arguments that turned violent: a man attacking his neighbors over access to a street parking spot, and brothers turning to blows and threats of gun violence while arguing over care for their elderly parents.

Two cases involved removing weapons from active-duty military personnel. One involved a 20-year-old Marine accused of going Absent Without Leave, purchasing a cache of high powered and semiautomatic weapons, and heading to the U.S.-Mexico border. He told family members he planned to shoot child traffickers. In the other case, a Marine declared on social media his desire to go his old high school and shoot people who were once “mean” to him.

Other recent cases include:

- An 82-year-old man with dementia was arrested on domestic violence charges for allegedly attacking his wife when she refused to withdraw \$100,000 from their bank account.
- A man was arrested for firing one of his many guns in his apartment. He told police that he became overwhelmed by his fear of COVID-19 while smoking methamphetamine.
- A divorced couple got into a heated argument about the at-home education of their young children during the school closure, resulting in the man being arrested on misdemeanor domestic violence charges.

The City Attorney’s Office launched California’s first comprehensive gun violence restraining order program in December 2017. Since the program’s inception, the Office has obtained more than 300 GVROs against individuals who posed a threat to themselves and others, including stalkers, disgruntled employees, and potential mass shooters. Courts have removed more than 500 firearms, including 40 assault weapons. A GVRO is a powerful tool, proven to thwart violence at schools, in our neighborhoods, and in the workplace. These orders are commonly sought to prevent fatalities in domestic violence situations as well as attempted suicides.

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