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Orange County Fentanyl Dealer and Identity Thief Extradited from Peru to Face Charges in 11 Criminal Cases

Multi-jurisdictional effort between Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, the Orange County District Attorney's Office, the Irvine Police Department, the Orange County Sheriff's Department, and the Tustin Police Department resulted in the capture of wanted fugitive; this is the ninth international fugitive since January to be successfully returned to Orange County to face criminal charges.

SANTA ANA, Calif. – An Orange County drug dealer and prolific identity thief with eleven open criminal cases who fled to Peru to avoid prosecution has been captured and successfully extradited to the United States as a result of a multi-jurisdictional effort to track down the wanted fugitive. This is the ninth fugitive since January who has been successfully removed or extradited from a foreign country and brought back to Orange County to face criminal charges.

Erick Grant Rustad, 44, of Irvine, was escorted from Peru to Los Angeles International Airport Tuesday evening by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents and turned over to the Irvine Police Department and booked into the Orange County Jail.

The extradition of Rustad is a result of the partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation, including the Office of the Law Enforcement Attaché in Lima, Peru; the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs; the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service; the Orange County District Attorney's Office; the Irvine Police Department; the Orange County Sheriff's Department; the Tustin Police Department, and Peruvian law enforcement authorities.

Rustad had eleven open criminal cases in Orange County and was out on bail on two felony cases when he was arrested in April 2025 on suspicion of felony possession of fentanyl with two prior convictions of possession of hard drug. Rustad posted a \$100,000 bond and was released from custody.

Instead of appearing at his next court appearance, Rustad fled to Mexico and then flew to Peru, where his mother is a Peruvian citizen.

On April 28, 2025, an Orange County Superior Court judge issued a \$150,000 bench warrant for Rustad's arrest. On November 10, 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California issued an arrest warrant for RUSTAD for unlawful flight to avoid prosecution for the State of California charges.

In May 2023, the Irvine Police Department served a search warrant at Rustad's Irvine home and vehicle and found several notebooks containing personal identifying information including names, social security numbers, addresses, credit card numbers, and phone numbers. They also found checks, blank access cards, and other identifying documents in the vehicle. Fourteen victims whose information was found denied knowing Rustad or allowing him access to their personal information. Officers also recovered printers, presses, access cards, identity documents belonging to others, and methamphetamine.

In July 2023, Rustad is seen on surveillance video stealing a key to a Maserati. In March 2024, while out on bail for stealing the Maserati key, Rustad is accused of breaking into a parking structure in an attempt to steal several bikes in a storage area. In March 2024, Rustad is accused of depositing a stolen and altered check for \$2,795 into his account. While out on bail for two prior cases, Rustad was arrested with another person with dozens of unused baggies and methamphetamine concealed in a hidden compartment under the vehicle's hood. Officers also discovered a license plate canceller which had the ability to flip the license plate with the switch of a button in the vehicle's trunk.

While out on bail for two prior felonies in April 2024, Rustad is accused of texting various associates discussing drug purchases, pricing, supply chains, and engaging in multiple hand-to-hand drug sales. A search warrant led to the recovery of fentanyl and methamphetamine, along with multiple phones and digital scales used in drug sales.

In June 2024, Rustad was arrested after officers observed someone delivering a weighted blue bag to Rustad's Irvine home. A search warrant was issued, and officers found a scale, plastic bags containing methamphetamine and fentanyl, empty clear baggies, crushed Xanax pills, and two cell phones.

Rustad has also been charged for stealing a package off a stranger's doorstep, stealing sunglasses from Nordstrom, and for drug possession with prior drug possession convictions.

Rustad was arrested in Peru on February 13, 2026, and extradition proceedings began with the cooperation of Peruvian authorities to remove him from Peru to face charges in Orange County, resulting in his successful extradition on October 13, 2026.

He faces a combined maximum sentence of 29 years and 6 months if convicted on all charges.

Last month, Brian Verbena-Martinez, a 35-year-old registered sex offender charged with kidnapping a 13-year-old Orange County girl and repeatedly raping her over several hours was extradited from Guatemala as part of a multi-jurisdictional effort to bring the wanted fugitive to justice.

Since December 2025, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs, the FBI's Orange County Resident Agency, the Orange County District Attorney's Office, and the Westminster Police Department, with the assistance of the Anaheim Police Department, and Guatemala's Policia Nacional Civil / Transnational Anti-Gang Task Force (TAG) have been working to track down Verbena-Martinez.

On December 5, 2025, Verbena-Martinez is accused of driving next to a 13-year-old girl who was walking on a street in the City of Westminster and asking her if she needed a ride. Verbena-Martinez is accused of becoming more and more aggressive until the girl finally got into his car.

Over the next several hours, Verbena-Martinez is accused of sexually assaulting her in multiple locations, including in several parking lots and his apartment while other children were home, before finally dropping

the girl off at her friend's home in Garden Grove.

Westminster police identified Verbena-Martinez as the suspect in the 13-year-old's kidnapping and rape and with the help of the FBI, Verbena-Martinez was located in Guatemala and arrested in February.

On Wednesday, September 30, 2026, Verbena-Martinez was extradited back to the United States by FBI agents with the approval of the Guatemalan government.

Verbena-Martinez has been charged with one felony count of kidnapping to commit a sex offense, one felony count of forcible rape, one felony count of sexual penetration of child under 14 years of age by force, one felony count of forcible oral copulation with a minor under the age of 14 years old, and three felony counts of lewd act upon a child under 14. He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole if convicted on all charges.

Verbena-Martinez is a registered sex offender after being convicted in 2019 in Los Angeles County of arranging to meet a minor with the intent to engage in sexual conduct.

"Justice cannot be pursued unilaterally," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "It is a mission that requires partnership, collaboration, and a tenaciousness that knows no borders and no bounds to track down those who break our laws. These extraditions are not just examples of that resolve and collaboration; it is the standard that we have set here in Orange County that we will continue to go to the ends of the earth in the pursuit of justice."

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