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From the Los Angeles Times

## Orange County sheriff lets jail gangs control bail bond referrals, claim alleges

Three bondsmen say their businesses are losing \$100 million a year because of the scheme, in which inmates are coerced to use certain agencies.

By Christine Hanley

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Three veteran bail bond agents have filed a legal claim against Orange County alleging that the Sheriff's Department allows gangs inside the jails to steer inmates to certain bail companies in exchange for kickbacks to the gangs.

In their claim, typically a first step to a lawsuit, the agents estimate that their businesses are losing \$100 million a year because of the scheme, which is known in law enforcement circles as "capping."

"It's impacting my business and there's illegal activities going on inside the jails . . . to the detriment to the people who are playing by the rules," Bob Drake, one of the bondsmen who filed the claim, said Friday. "We suspect several companies. I don't know the exact number. That's not as important as the Sheriff's Department not going after and stopping the activity from occurring in the jails."

According to the bondsmen's attorney, Richard P. Herman, former Sheriff Michael S. Carona allowed his top lieutenant, former Assistant Sheriff George Jaramillo, to initiate the scheme, and current Sheriff Sandra Hutchens has allowed it to continue.

In a statement, the Sheriff's Department said it is in regular contact with leaders of the bail bond industry and will review the claims to determine if an investigation is warranted.

"If we are made aware of any illegal activity in our jails, we will take all appropriate action to see that it is stopped and those responsible are prosecuted," the statement reads.

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