

Court disperses drug asset forfeiture funds

June 7, 2023



The Del Norte Superior Court officially released a \$375,500 asset forfeiture Friday, May 26. Judge Darren McElfresh ruled reasonable inference the cash was sourced from illegal drugs from a traffic stop conducted by sheriff deputies in February.

County Counsel Joel Campbell-Blair represented the state, the district attorney and the sheriff in making claim to the cash.

The driver of the rented vehicle, Quirate Jimenez, was stopped for suspected drunk driving. Suspect Jimenez gave permission to search the vehicle and a small amount of a white powder later determined to be cocaine was discovered.

Deputy Dustin McQuillan summoned additional support including K9 Zuko, who headed directly to the vehicle's trunk where the neatly-wrapped cash was observed.

Jimenez was arrested on a felony charge of carrying more than \$100,000 in cash. Deputies secured the booty. Auditor Clinton Schaad and staff counted the seized asset. The money was placed in the county treasury,

awaiting a claim for the cash. No claim was made to either the sheriff or the court.

The court awarded the dispersal under Health and Safety Code Section 11489. Here is the breakdown:

- 65 percent (\$243,750) will be dispersed to the Del Norte Sheriff. 15 percent of those funds (\$36,562.50) will be placed in a special fund maintained by the county. The sole purpose of the special fund will be to combat drug abuse and diverted gang activity.
- 10 percent (\$37,500) will be directed to the district attorney.
- 24 percent (\$90,120) will be deposited to the state's general fund.
- One percent (\$3,750) will be sent to the state environmental enforcement and training account.

When advised of the court's decision, Sheriff Garrett Scott was elated. Has the sheriff determined how the newly-acquired funds will be allocated? Yes! Scott replied, "the success of the K9 program has been monumental. Now, we have the funds to seek another K9 and training to accompany Deputy Kenny Fahndrich and Zuko." Additional funding will be directed to deputy training.

The status of felony suspect Jimenez remains unclear. He was released from Del Norte custody. The district attorney has not stated if Quirate Jimenez will be prosecuted.