

Two Santa Barbara County Jail Workers Arrested for Sexual Assault

Two-Year Investigation Ends in Multiple Charges



Salvador Vargas and Gabriel Castro | Credit: Courtesy

By **Delaney Smith**

Tue Feb 25, 2020 | 10:23am

Two Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office employees were arrested on multiple felony sexual assault charges Friday, including forcible oral copulation, sexual activity with a person in custody, and forcible sexual penetration by a foreign object.

The suspects, 34-year-old Salvador Vargas of Santa Maria and 47-year-old Gabriel Castro of Ventura, were held in Santa Barbara County Jail and Ventura County Jail on \$100,000 bonds, respectively. Both were released on bail over the weekend — Vargas's arraignment date is March 23 and Castro's arraignment date is March 6.

The charges involve at least two female victims — one per defendant — and prosecutor Jennifer Karapetian was unable to state if there were other known victims. The two confirmed victims were inmates at the Santa Barbara County

Main Jail when Vargas and Castro were employees there.

The arrests come after a nearly two-year internal investigation of Vargas and Castro, whose criminal activities “occurred around the same time with intertwined witnesses,” according to Raquel Zick, a spokesperson for the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office. Vargas was hired in April 2018 and worked as a social worker discharge planner in the main jail; Castro was hired in July 2002 and worked as a custody deputy in the main jail.

Both suspects were put on administrative leave in September 2018 after the investigations commenced. Neither the Sheriff’s Office nor the District Attorney’s Office could offer deep insight into an open case, but Zick described the investigation as intensive.

“During the investigations, detectives identified an extensive list of possible witnesses and attempted to identify additional potential victims,” Zick said. “This follow-up required interviews of numerous inmates, some of whom had been transferred to custody facilities throughout the state.”

Thu Nov 19, 2020 | 22:43pm

<https://www.independent.com/2020/02/25/two-santa-barbara-county-jail-workers-arrested-for-sexual-assau>