

SUMMARY STATEMENT

State v. Matthew Elliot Cohagan, Docket No. 44800

In an appeal from Canyon County, the Supreme Court reversed the district court's denial of Matthew Cohagan's motion to suppress and remanded the case to the district court for further proceedings. While driving, Officers Curtis and Otto observed Cohagan and Officer Curtis thought Cohagan resembled an individual who had an outstanding warrant. The officers located Cohagan shopping in a nearby grocery store. Officer Otto approached Cohagan and requested Cohagan's driver's license. After inspecting the license, Officer Otto determined that Cohagan was not the individual with the outstanding arrest warrant. The officers left the store, but returned soon after on another matter. Officer Curtis decided he wanted to confirm that Cohagan was not the individual with the outstanding arrest warrant. As he approached Cohagan, Officer Curtis recognized that Cohagan was not the individual he suspected, but still asked to check Cohagan's identification. Officer Curtis retained the identification while running a warrant check. Cohagan was found to have outstanding arrest warrants. During a search incident to arrest, the officers discovered methamphetamine. Cohagan moved to suppress the evidence found during the search.

At the hearing on Cohagan's motion to suppress, the State argued that suppression was unwarranted because the discovery of methamphetamine was sufficiently attenuated from the illegal seizure. The district court denied Cohagan's motion to suppress because it found that the discovery of the outstanding warrant was an intervening circumstance that sufficiently purged the discovery of the methamphetamine from the taint of the illegal search. Cohagan entered a conditional guilty plea, reserving his right to appeal the denial of his motion to suppress. The Court of Appeals reversed and this Court granted the State's timely petition for review.

The Supreme Court reversed the decision of the district court, finding that there was no reason for Officer Curtis to stop Cohagan and run a warrant check as there was no indication that Cohagan was involved in illegal activity. The Supreme Court held that the discovery of the evidence was not sufficiently attenuated from the illegal stop as to break the causal chain between the unconstitutional stop and the discovery of the evidence. The Court emphasized that it will not sanction the suspicionless seizure of citizens.