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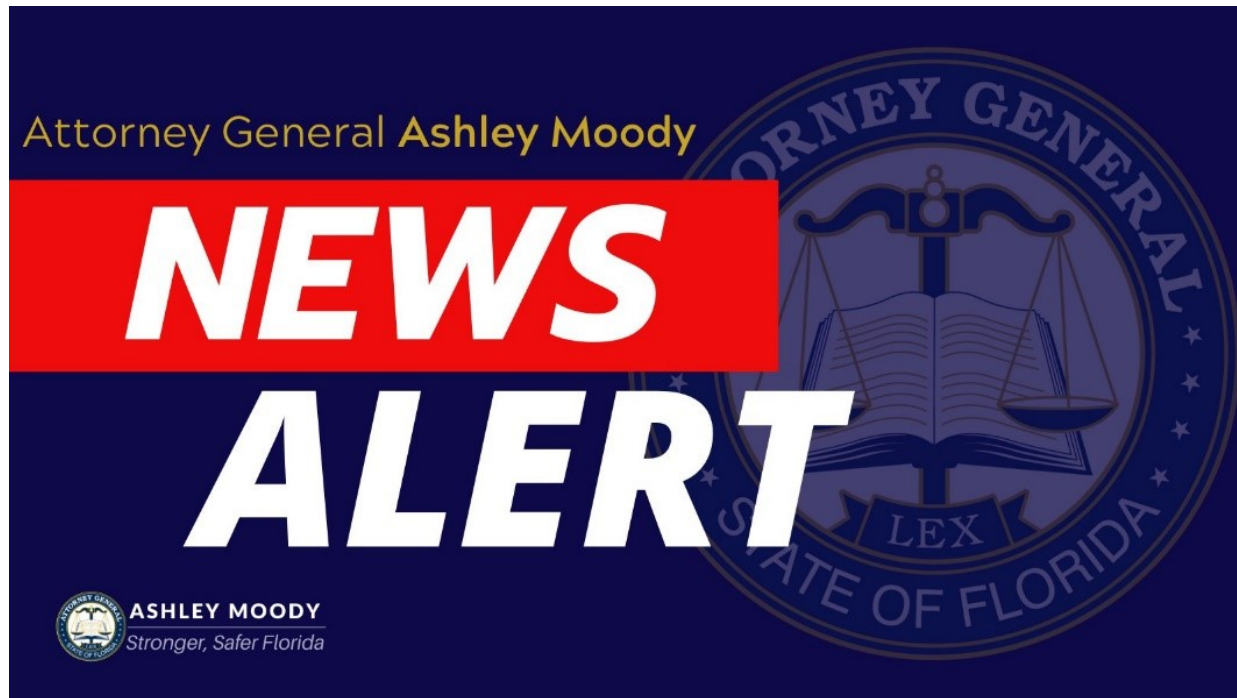
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OFFICE OF THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General Moody's OSP Charges More Than 20 People in RICO Case Involving Luxury Vehicles



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution is charging more than 20 people in a criminal organization involving fraudulent Vehicle Identification Numbers on high-end vehicles. Florida Department of Law Enforcement agents led the investigation known as Operation Gone in 60 Days, and OSP will now prosecute the cases.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Organized theft has no place in Florida, and I am grateful for the collaborative efforts by our law enforcement partners and my Statewide Prosecutors in shutting down this massive car theft ring. These criminals thought they could evade the law, and now they will answer for their crimes."

Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis said, "Insurance fraud is a costly crime that drives up rates for every policyholder on Florida's roadways and puts drivers in danger. These alleged criminals were stealing expensive cars and selling phony insurance policies to cover up their elaborate fraud scheme. Thank you to the Attorney General's Office, FDLE, and my insurance fraud detectives who worked together with local law enforcement to bring these bad actors to justice. If you choose to break the law in Florida, you will be caught and held accountable."

Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass said, "The members of this criminal organization orchestrated a multi-stage scheme to defraud potential car customers at every step of the way, selling stolen vehicles with fraudulent VINs, illegally sourced license plates, and dummy insurance policies. This complex criminal enterprise victimized citizens and businesses across the state, but the suspects' days of profiting off the misery of hard-working Floridians is at an end. I am tremendously grateful to our agents and analysts for their unwavering commitment to this investigation over the past half-decade, to Attorney General Ashley Moody and her Office of Statewide Prosecution for their steadfast partnership in bringing these criminals to justice, and to our many partners across the state and beyond for their assistance in dismantling this illegal organization."

Florida Highway Patrol Colonel Gary Howze II said, "Operation Gone in 60 Days and the arrests of the individuals involved represent years of interagency work and steadfast determination. In this case, the suspects took advantage of those around them for personal benefit and with zero regards to the consequences of their actions or how they would affect their victims. Today is another example of Florida's refusal to allow criminal organizations or activities to prey on its citizens and reminds everyone that Florida is a law-and-order state."

National Insurance Crime Bureau Director of Field Operations for the Southeast Region Charlie Worsham said, "We are proud to partner with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and aid in the fight to protect the citizens of Florida from criminal organizations like this one that commit theft and fraud. NICB, along with our partners in law enforcement, is committed to combating and preventing vehicle theft."

FDLE's investigation began in July 2018 when looking into allegations of Florida Commercial Driver Licenses being illegally distributed to persons who did not complete the required training courses. Investigators discovered a criminal organization that issued fraudulent VINs to high-end vehicles obtained through fraud or theft, selling the vehicles below market value, fraudulently assigning tags, defrauding customers through purporting to issue automobile insurance and other crimes.

The crime ring's illegal activities centered around profiting from the theft and sale of luxury vehicles from brands like Land Rover, Maserati and Porsche. Suspects illegally acquired the vehicles by using couriers, fake names and fraudulent payments to purchase the vehicles from dealerships who did not discover the fraud until after the vehicles went missing from lots. Another vehicle-acquisition scheme saw the suspects keeping rental vehicles, filing false police reports claiming the vehicles as stolen.

Investigators found that the organization's leader then generated counterfeit VINs to attach to the vehicle to further cover up the thefts. Since the vehicles were obtained illegally and lacked legitimate paperwork that could be used to register them, another suspect, who worked in a Miami-based dealership, issued temporary tags from the dealership or transferred a tag from a legitimate vehicle to the fraudulent vehicle. Suspects also purported to sell auto insurance to customers purchasing the stolen vehicles that often resulted in customers receiving an initial policy that quickly lapsed as the suspects kept the actual payments provided.

The suspects facing charges in this case include:

- **Raismel Cruz, 38, of Tampa**

-Arrested on October 6, 2020, and June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
-Charged with racketeering, conspiracy to commit racketeering, organized fraud over \$50,000, grand theft, grand theft of a motor vehicle, conspiracy to commit grand theft of a motor vehicle, dealing in stolen property, counterfeiting payment instruments, uttering forged instruments, conspiracy to commit false and fraudulent insurance claims, altering the VIN of a motor vehicle, fraudulent use of personal identification information, and unlawful use of a two-way communications device

- **Norisa Janelle Cruz, 41, of Tampa**

-Arrested October 6, 2020, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
-Charged with racketeering, conspiracy to commit racketeering, conspiracy to commit grand theft of motor vehicles, dealing in stolen property, conspiracy to commit false and fraudulent insurance claims, conspiracy to utter forged instruments, and altering the VIN of a motor vehicle

- **Yassiel Rosado-Gonzalez, 34, of Tampa**

-Arrested October 6, 2020, and February 11, 2022, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
-Charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering, grand theft, conspiracy to commit grand theft of a motor vehicle, uttering forged instruments, conspiracy to utter forged instruments, solicitation to utter forged instruments, conspiracy to commit false and fraudulent insurance claims, altering the VIN of a motor vehicle, and unlawful use of a two-way communications device

- **Aleny Margarita Lopez, 30, of Tampa**

-Arrested March 15, 2022, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
-Charged with money laundering, grand theft, and uttering a forged instrument

- **Lilian Yennifer Mesa-Cruz, 29, of Mulberry**

-Arrested October 6, 2020, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
-Charged with insurance fraud, grand theft, uttering a forged instrument, and possession of a vehicle with an altered VIN

- **Oney Tomas-Gamboa, 39, of Tampa**

-Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
-Charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering

- **Mariangel Lizardo-Peraza, 29, of Miami Gardens**

-Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Miami-Dade County Jail
-Charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering

- **Roberto Marrero-Cisnero, 66, of Miami**

- In federal custody
- Charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering

- **Fernando Rodriguez, 46, of Valrico**

- Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering

- **Ernesto Rodriguez, 51, of Valrico**

- Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle and dealing in stolen property

- **Luis Enrique Rios-Fonseca, 30, of Tampa**

- Arrested June 21, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with conspiracy to deal in stolen property

- **Lazaro Velazquez-Gomez, 27, of Spring Hill**

- Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hernando County Jail
- Charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering

- **Leandro Perez-Pulido, 47, of Plant City**

- Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with grand theft and dealing in stolen property

- **Jennifer Hernandez-Torres, 38, of Plant City**

- Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with dealing in stolen property

- **Israel Alain Vasquez-Gomez, 53, of Tampa**

- Arrested October 6, 2020, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle and conspiracy to commit grand theft of a motor vehicle

- **Abdiel Hernandez-Noda, 47, of Tampa**

- Arrested October 22, 2020, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail
- Charged with giving a false report to law enforcement, false and fraudulent insurance claims, and conspiracy to commit false and fraudulent insurance claims

- **Jorge Manuel Gonzalez-Aris, 33, of Miami**

- Arrested September 17, 2019, and booked into Miami-Dade County Jail
- Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle, possession of certificate title with the intent to

defraud, and driving while license suspended

- **Dolnnis Quesada-Nuñez, 33, of Tampa**

-Arrested January 7, 2022, and booked into Miami-Dade County Jail

-Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle and possession of a motor vehicle with an altered VIN

- **Kiara Cherise Bankston, 24, of Tampa**

-Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail

-Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle and dealing in stolen property

- **Adrian Hernandez-Hernandez, 45, of Tampa**

-Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail

-Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle, dealing in stolen property, and possession of a motor vehicle with an altered VIN

- **Jose Angel Oro, 56, of Tampa**

-Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail

-Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle, dealing in stolen property, and possession of a motor vehicle with an altered VIN

- **Juan Santa Cruz Ortiz, 31, of Tampa**

-Arrested June 20, 2023, and booked into Hillsborough County Jail

-Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle, dealing in stolen property, and possession of a motor vehicle with an altered VIN

- **Alberto J. Sandoval-Mejia, 37, of Cape Coral**

-Arrested on June 23, 2023, and booked into Lee County Jail

-Charged with grand theft of a motor vehicle

- **Maday Rodriguez Iglesias, 49, of Tampa**

-Wanted for conspiracy to commit racketeering

- **Jose Luis Hernandez-Mercado, 26, of Kissimmee**

-Wanted for grand theft of a motor vehicle, dealing in stolen property, and possession of a motor vehicle with an altered VIN

All charges are felonies. In addition to the 23 suspects already arrested and two with active arrest warrants, agents filed two additional arrest affidavits with the court, for a total of 27

suspects.

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