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**U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES ARREST OF SIX
IN CAR THEFT AND RETITLING RING**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, MARK J. MERSHON, Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and New York State Department of Motor Vehicles ("DMV") Commissioner DAVID J. SWARTS announced the arrests today of six individuals on charges of participating in an illegal scheme to retag and sell hundreds of stolen vehicles. As alleged in the Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

From August of 1999 through the present, the defendants engaged in a scheme to alter, replace or tamper with public vehicle identification number ("VIN") plates and stickers for hundreds of stolen motor vehicles -- a process known as "retagging" -- in order to conceal the fact that the vehicles were stolen.

The defendants would alter certificates of title to motor vehicles, or obtain state-issued certificates of title based on false information and altered out-of-state certificates-of-title, so that the certificates matched the fraudulent VIN plates and stickers on the retagged vehicles. Through this scheme, the defendants created the illusion that they held legitimate title to the stolen motor vehicles, thus allowing them to either use or sell the vehicles.

The seven-count Indictment charges defendants RICHARD

ESPINOSA, a/k/a "Ricardo Espinosa," a/k/a "Diego Escalera," a/k/a "Modesto Colon," a/k/a "Pablo Diaz," GILBERTO ESPINOSA, a/k/a "Marcos Trinidad," MANUEL ESPINOSA, RAYMONDO MORALES, a/k/a "Raymond Morales," JOSE COSME, a/k/a "Slim," ADRIAN BERNABE, and CHRISTIAN BERNABE with tampering with motor vehicle identification numbers; trafficking in motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts; transportation of stolen vehicles; sale and receipt of stolen vehicles; mail fraud; conspiracy to alter and remove motor vehicle identification numbers, traffic in motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts, transport stolen vehicles and sell and receive stolen vehicles; and conspiracy to commit mail fraud.

Six of seven defendants named in the Indictment were arrested earlier today; MORALES is still at large. Two of the defendants will be arraigned before Magistrate Judge GORENSTEIN in Manhattan federal court this afternoon, one will be arraigned before Judge FOX in White Plains federal court, and the rest will be arraigned after removal to the Southern District of New York. The case was assigned to United States District Judge GEORGE B. DANIELS. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 80 years in jail and a fine of the greater of: \$1.75 million or twice the gross gain or loss resulting from the crime.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of the FBI and DMV, and also thanked the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Division, the New Jersey State Police, the North Bergen, New Jersey Police Department and the Georgia Department of Revenue for their work in this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney MICHAEL D. MAIMIN is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges and allegations contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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