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*United States Attorney
District of Connecticut*

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Ansonia Man Admits Stealing and Selling Catalytic Converters

Vanessa Roberts Avery, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that FRANCISCO AYALA, 22, of Ansonia, has pleaded in Hartford federal court to offenses related to his participation in a stolen catalytic converter trafficking ring.

According to court documents and statements made in court, law enforcement has been investigating the theft of catalytic converters from motor vehicles across Connecticut. A catalytic converter contains precious metals, can easily be removed from its vehicle, and is difficult to trace, making it a desirable target for thieves. The average scrap price for catalytic converters currently varies between \$300 and \$1,500, depending on the model and type of precious metal component.

The investigation revealed that Ayala engaged in numerous catalytic converter thefts throughout Connecticut, and he was caught on surveillance video stealing converters from two vans at a business in Stratford on March 9, 2022. Between December 2021 and May 2022, Ayala and an associate sold approximately \$150,000 worth of stolen catalytic converters to a co-conspirator who transported the converters to other businesses, including businesses in New York and New Jersey, for further resale and profit.

On April 4, 2023, Ayala pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen property, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of five years, and one count of interstate transportation of stolen property, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years. He is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala on July 13, 2023.

Ayala is detained pending sentencing.

This investigation is being led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CI), and the East Hartford Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S.

Attorneys Lauren C. Clark and A. Reed Durham.

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