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New Haven Man Admits Role in Catalytic Converter Theft Ring

Vanessa Roberts Avery, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that MERVIN FIGUEROA, 27, of New Haven, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala in Hartford 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 Alexander Kolitsas owned and operated Downpipe Depot & Recycling LLC ("Downpipe Depot"), which had a warehouse on Park Avenue in East Hartford. From approximately January 2021 to June 2022, Kolitsas and Downpipe Depot purchased stolen catalytic converters from a network of thieves, including Figueroa, and then transported and sold the catalytic converters to recycling businesses in New York and New Jersey. Kolitsas instructed his suppliers on the types of converters that would obtain the most profit upon resale, and he would often meet with them and transact business at his home late at night or behind a family member's restaurant after hours.

Business records seized during the investigation revealed that Downpipe Depot paid Figueroa $169,840 for catalytic converters, including converters that were stolen in two separate incidents from vehicles at U-Haul Moving and Storage in Naugatuck. In messages between Kolitsas and Figueroa, Kolitsas told Figueroa that he needed to remove anti-theft tags that U-Haul had placed on the converters before Kolitsas would take them.

Figueroa 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. Judge Nagala scheduled sentencing for February 5, 2025.

Figueroa was arrested on November 15, 2023. He is released on a $50,000 bond pending sentencing.

Kolitsas pleaded guilty to related charges on October 7, 2024, and awaits 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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