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New Haven Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Role in Catalytic Converter Theft Ring

Marc H. Silverman, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that MERVIN FIGUEROA, 27, of New Haven, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala in Hartford to 14 months of imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release, for 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. 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 in Wolcott late at night or behind a family member's restaurant in Middlebury after hours.

Starting in January 2022, Kolitsas maintained electronic invoices reflecting the purchase of stolen catalytic converters from Figueroa and other suppliers. In several of the invoices, Kolitsas permitted his suppliers to use fictitious names or business names in order to

create the appearance of proper recordkeeping while obscuring from his records the true source of the stolen converters. The invoices show that between approximately January 26 and May 31, 2022, Kolitsas and Downpipe Depot paid approximately $3,345,675 to purchase stolen converters from his co-conspirators.

The invoices reflect 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. The investigation revealed that Figueroa also stole converters from school buses.

Figueroa was arrested on November 15, 2023. On October 29, 2024, he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen property and one count of interstate transportation of stolen property.

Figueroa, who is released on a $50,000 bond, is required to report to prison on June 2.

Kolitsas pleaded guilty to related charges 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 through the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Program. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations through a prosecutor-led and intelligence-driven approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF.

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