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Subject: U.S. ATTORNEY Press Release -- Leader of Catalytic Converter Theft Ring Pleads Guilty
Date: Monday, October 7, 2024 5:27:51 PM

U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
District of Connecticut

www.justice.gov/ct

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 7, 2024

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Leader of Catalytic Converter Theft Ring Pleads Guilty

Vanessa Roberts Avery, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that ALEXANDER KOLITSAS, 30, of Wolcott, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala in Hartford to offenses related to his leadership of a catalytic converter theft and 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.

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 used Downpipe Depot to purchase stolen catalytic converters from a network of thieves. 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. Analysis of records seized from Downpipe Depot revealed that many of Kolitsas's suppliers were selling thousands to tens of thousands of dollars' worth of stolen converters to Kolitsas each week.

Kolitsas regularly transported and sold the catalytic converters to recycling businesses in New York and New Jersey. Some of these trips yielded payments in excess of $200,000.

The investigation also revealed that Kolitsas used proceeds from the theft and sale of catalytic converters to purchase a Ford Transit Van and other items.

Kolitsas 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 promotional money laundering, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years.

As part of his plea agreement, Kolitsas has agreed to forfeit the Ford Transit Van, a 2016 Polaris Slingshot, $91,581 held in a Downpipe Depot bank account, and $75,127 in cash, all of which was seized by law enforcement during the investigation.

Judge Nagala scheduled sentencing for January 22. Kolitsas is released on a $150,000 bond 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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