From: Carson, Thomas (USACT)
To: Carson, Thomas (USACT)
Subject: U.S. ATTORNEY Press Release -- West Hartford Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Participating in Catalytic Converter Theft Ring
Date: Thursday, February 20, 2025 1:08:48 PM

U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
District of Connecticut

www.justice.gov/ct

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 20, 2025

CONTACT:
Tom Carson
Public Affairs Officer
(203) 821-3722
(203) 996-1393 (cell)

West Hartford Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Participating in Catalytic Converter Theft Ring

Marc H. Silverman, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that YANQUEE RODRIGUEZ, also known as "Yankster Rodriguez," 28, of West Hartford, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala in Hartford to 15 months of imprisonment, followed by three years of supervised release, for participating in a catalytic converter theft conspiracy.

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 Rodriguez, 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.

Business records seized during the investigation revealed that Rodriguez was one of Downpipe Depot's largest suppliers of stolen catalytic converters. Between January 2021 and May 2022, Downpipe Depot paid Rodriguez $411,845 for catalytic converters. Kolitsas paid

Rodriguez and his other catalytic converter suppliers a total of more than $3.3 million during that time.

Rodriguez was arrested on November 15, 2023. On June 26, 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.

Rodriguez, who is released on a $100,000 bond, is required to report to prison on May 19.

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.

###