From: Carson, Thomas (USACT)
To: Carson, Thomas (USACT)
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CONTACT:
Tom Carson
Public Affairs Officer
(203) 821-3722
(203) 996-1393 (cell)

Leader of Catalytic Converter Theft Ring Sentenced to 5 Years in Federal Prison

Marc H. Silverman, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that ALEXANDER KOLITSAS, 31, of Wolcott, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Sarala V. Nagala in Hartford to 60 months of imprisonment, followed by two years of supervised release, for operating a catalytic converter theft and trafficking ring. Judge Nagala also ordered Kolitsas to pay a $50,000 fine.

According to court documents and statements made in court, this matter stems from an investigation into 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 in Middlebury 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.

Starting in January 2022, Kolitsas maintained electronic invoices reflecting the purchase of stolen catalytic converters from his 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, 2022, and May 31, 2022, which was only a portion of the time period that Kolitsas operated Downpipe Depot and trafficked stolen catalytic converters, Kolitsas and Downpipe Depot paid more than $3.3 million to purchase converters from his suppliers.

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. In an interview with law enforcement, the owner of the New York recycling business estimated that he paid Kolitsas a total of approximately $10 million in cash for catalytic converters.

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 was arrested on August 24, 2022. On October 7, 2024, he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen property and one count of promotional money laundering.

Judge Nagala ordered Kolitsas 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.

Kolitsas, who is released on a $150,000 bond, is required to report to prison on July 14.

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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