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MAJOR AUTO THEFT RING SMASHED IN UNDERCOVER OPERATION

8 Charged With Stealing \$400,000 Worth of Automobiles From Auto Dealerships And Fencing Them

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, announced today that eight alleged members of an auto theft ring – including a public school assistant principal – have been indicted on charges involving the theft of sixteen late model, high-end automobiles with a total value exceeding \$400,000 mostly from dealership parking lots in Queens County and elsewhere. Some of the automobiles – the majority of which were 2008 models and included expensive BMWs, Mercedes Benzs and Lincolns – then allegedly had their vehicle identification numbers changed or altered before being resold.

District Attorney Brown said, “A sweeping nine-month investigation that utilized both court-authorized wiretaps and traditional surveillance has dismantled a loosely knit auto theft ring that specialized in stealing luxury automobiles. For such thieves, an automobile dealership represented the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. They could leisurely window shop for the exact makes and models of the cars they wanted and then, under the cover of darkness, steal them.”

Commissioner Kelly said, “This successful operation is emblematic of why car thefts in New York City, including Queens, have plummeted in recent years.”

The defendants have been variously charged in two separate indictments with the crimes of second-, third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny and fourth- and fifth-degree conspiracy. They face up to either seven or 15 years in prison if convicted (see addendum for details).

The charges are the result of a joint undercover investigation by the New York City Police Department’s Auto Crime Division and the Queens District Attorney’s Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau.

According to the charges, Melvin Pinckney – with the assistance of alleged ring members David Jimenez and Alexander Gil – stole vehicles from auto dealership parking lots in Queens County and Long Island. It is alleged that a majority of the automobiles were taken from Recon Motors, located at 112-09 14th Avenue in Whitestone, Queens, which is a storage facility where numerous automobile dealerships store their excess inventory. The three defendants would then

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allegedly drive the vehicles to various lay-up locations – such as the Lincoln Tower’s Parking Garage at 790 Eldert Lane in Brooklyn and in the vicinity of 78th Street and 153rd Avenue in Queens – where the vehicles were kept until they could be sold. Other alleged members of the ring – such as Eddie Olivera and Lisle Jackson, an assistant principal – allegedly purchased and traded stolen automobiles with the defendant Pinckney. It is further alleged that Trevlyn LaTore operated a tagging operations out of a single car garage located at 149-19 133rd Avenue in Queens, where ring members Ibn Traynham and Kimani Salley brought cars to be tagged. As an alleged tagger in the ring, LaTore’s job was to alter the stolen vehicles by replacing and/or altering the true VIN plates with false or forged ones.

Among the victimized dealerships were: Mercedes-Benz of Massapequa, located at 20 Carmans Road in Massapequa, Longs Island; Hassel BMW, located at 291 West Sunrise Highway in Freeport, Long Island; Atlantic Toyota, located at 20 Sunrise Highway in Amityville, Long Island; Hillside Honda, located at 139-07 Hillside Avenue in Jamaica, Queens; Queensboro Toyota, located at 62-10 Northern Boulevard in Woodside, Bayside Chrysler Jeep, located at 212-19 Northern Boulevard in Bayside, Queens; DiBlasi Ford, located 112-21 Northern Boulevard in Corona, Queens; Popular Ford, located at 2505 Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn; and Amaral Auto Sales, located at 295 Park Avenue in Lyndhurst, New Jersey

District Attorney Brown and Commissioner Kelly thanked the National Insurance Crime Bureau for its assistance and cooperation during the course of the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Michael Pesale of the New York City Police Department’s Auto Crime Division under the supervision of Sergeants Joseph Ricotta and Jose Santiago, and the overall supervision of Lieutenant Wade Kern, Captain Werner Hellman, and Deputy Inspector Charles V. Talamo.

Assistant District Attorney Jennifer J. Etkin, of the District Attorney’s Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau, is prosecuting the cases under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gerard A. Brave, Bureau Chief, Mark Katz, Deputy Chief, and Mary M. Lowenburg, Chief of the Auto Crime and Insurance Fraud Unit, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigation Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that an indictment is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: E-version of this press release posted at www.queensda.org

ADDENDUM

The defendants were arraigned earlier this week in Queens County Supreme Court.

Melvin Pinckney, 54, of 398 Sheffield Avenue in Brooklyn, has been charged with second-, third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, fourth- and fifth-degree conspiracy. Pinckney, who was ordered held on \$100,000 (with a bail sufficiency hearing), faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

David Jimenez, 40, of 790 Eldert Lane in Brooklyn, has been charged with second-, third and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, fourth- and fifth-degree conspiracy. Jimenez, who was ordered held on \$50,000 bail, faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

Alexander Gil, 34, of 179 Atkins Avenue in Brooklyn, has been charged with second- and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property, third-degree grand larceny, fourth- and fifth-degree conspiracy. Gil, who was ordered held on \$25,000 bail, faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

Lisle Jackson, 54, of 844 Schenectady Avenue in Brooklyn, is a teacher and assistant principal at Middle School 61 (the Gladstone H. Atwell School) located at 400 Empire Boulevard in Brooklyn, New York. Jackson has been charged with third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and fifth-degree conspiracy. Jackson, who was released on his own recognizance, faces up to seven years in prison if convicted.

Eddie Olivera, 38, of 3226 Bronxwood Avenue in the Bronx, has been charged with second-, third and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and fourth- and fifth-degree conspiracy. Olivera, who was ordered held on \$50,000 bail, faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

Trevlyn Latore, 35, of 26 Harriman Avenue in Hempstead, Long Island, has been charged with third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and fifth-degree conspiracy. Latore, who was released on his own recognizance, faces up to seven years in prison if convicted.

Kimani Salley, 30, of 638 MacDonough Street in Brooklyn, has been charged with third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and fifth-degree conspiracy. Salley, who was released on his own recognizance, faces up to seven years in prison if convicted.

Ibn Traynham, 32, of 413 Dodd Street in East Orange, New Jersey, has been charged with third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and fifth-degree conspiracy. Traynham, who was released on \$10,000 bail, faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

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