

# **FBI, Massachusetts State Police's 'Operation Cut & Run' cracks down on catalytic converter thieves**

"In conjunction with the arrests of a crew of catalytic converters thieves made today in Operation Cut & Run, raid teams executed search warrants at multiple associated locations in Agawam, Springfield, Palmer, and Holyoke.

This morning arrest teams fanned out across the Greater Springfield area and arrested seven members of a crew suspected of stealing catalytic converters from vehicles in Massachusetts and New Hampshire over the last two years. In all the defendants, who are charged federally, cut more than 470 catalytic converters worth approximately \$2 million from vehicles. This morning's takedowns were the culmination of months of investigative work by State troopers, local police officers, and federal agents.

The investigation, which was named Operation Cut and Run, was begun by the Massachusetts State Police in October with assistance from local police departments sharing information about thefts in their communities.



*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

The investigation grew to include the FBI and a total of nearly 80 law enforcement agencies. The investigation, coordinated by the State Police Fusion Center, involved dozens of State Troopers, police officers, and federal agents and involved extensive surveillance and other investigative steps.

Arrest teams took all seven targets into custody this morning. We are still in the process of executing search warrants at several target locations. The arrestees are as follow:

- RAFAEL DAVILA, a/k/a "Robin Hood," 35, of Feeding Hills (Agawam), Mass.;
- JOSE TORRES, a/k/a "Goldy," a/k/a "Goldy Tech," 37, of Springfield, Mass.;
- NICHOLAS DAVILA, 25, of Springfield, Mass.;
- CARLOS FONSECA, a/k/a "Charlito," 26, of Springfield, Mass.;
- ZACHARY MARSHALL, 26, of Holyoke and Palmer, Mass.;
- SANTO FELIBERTY, 34, of Springfield, Mass.; and
- ALEXANDER OYOLOA, a/k/a "Dirty," 37, of Springfield, Mass.

The arrestees were booked at State Police Barracks in Springfield, Westfield, Millbury, Sturbridge, Charlton, Weston, and Boston. They face various federal charges

including conspiracy to transport stolen property in interstate commerce, interstate transportation of stolen property, theft from and conspiracy to commit theft from a federally insured bank, and money laundering. They will be prosecuted by the US Attorney's Office for Massachusetts.



*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

Raid teams are still in the process of executing search warrants at locations associated with the defendants. Investigators have seized several firearms, body armor, US currency, multiple vehicles, and multiple catalytic converters, including some suspected of being stolen by the crew earlier this week in several Metrowest communities.

The arrests were announced today at a press conference by US Attorney for Massachusetts Rachael Rollins and representatives from the Massachusetts State Police, FBI, and National Insurance Crime Bureau.

“The members of this criminal network arrested today, under

the cloak of darkness, traveled throughout our state cutting valuable catalytic converters from vehicles owned by unsuspecting citizens and businesses. Their criminal acts violated the security and rights of vehicle owners, necessitated costly repairs, and interfered with commercial operations of business owners and the daily lives of numerous victims,” State Police Interim Colonel John Mawn Jr. said. “The actions of these defendants are an affront to law-abiding citizens everywhere.”

Catalytic converters are a component of a vehicle’s exhaust device that reduce the toxic gas and pollutants from a vehicle’s internal combustion engine into safe emissions, and are required on all combustion engine automobiles in the United States. Catalytic converters use precious metals in their center or ‘core’ and are targeted for theft due to the high value of these metals – including palladium, platinum and rhodium. Some of these precious metals are more valuable per ounce than gold and their value has been increasing in recent years, with black-market prices being more than \$1,000 each.

# OPERATION **CUT & RUN**



RAFAEL DAVILA,  
a/k/a “ROBBIN HOOD”



JOSE TORRES, a/k/a “GOLDY,”  
a/k/a “GOLDY TECH”



CARLOS FONSECA, a/k/a  
“CHARLITO”



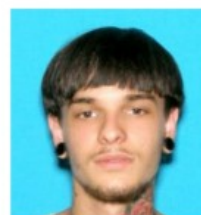
SANTO FELIBERTY



ALEX OYOLA,  
a/k/a “DIRTY”



NICOLAS DAVILA



ZACHARY MARSHALL

*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

Catalytic converters thieves conduct searches in residential neighborhoods, parking lots and other locations to steal the most high-value catalytic converters. Located in a vehicle's undercarriage, the theft of a vehicle's catalytic converter results in damage that renders the vehicle inoperable – both mechanically and legally under EPA regulations – until properly replaced.

According to the charging documents, law enforcement throughout Massachusetts and New Hampshire identified a large number of catalytic converter thefts for which a maroon Acura was identified as having been involved.

These incidents involved at least two suspects wearing dark clothing, who would target residential and commercial vehicles. The suspects were skilled and able to locate and cut away the catalytic converter from a vehicle within a minute in most instances. The suspects utilized battery operated power-tools, specifically a fast-cutting reciprocating saw. Some vehicles needed to be jacked up in order to access the catalytic converters and the suspects would promptly place the jack under the vehicle, raise it, cut the catalytic converter, stow it in the rear of the maroon Acura and move on.

The investigation revealed that the maroon Acura belonged to RAFAEL DAVILA, the alleged theft crew leader who planned and participated in each of the thefts. It is alleged that RAFAEL DAVILA engages in catalytic converter thefts and burglaries on a full-time basis, committing thefts multiple nights per week for upwards of eight hours a night. Additionally, cell phone data allegedly revealed that Rafael Davila maintained meticulous notes accounting for the locations that he and his co-conspirators had targeted and the number of catalytic converters that had been stolen, including the makes and models and when they were dropped off.



*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

It is alleged that Rafael Davila would undertake the thefts with a group of individuals, including his brother NICHOLAS DAVILA, FONSECA, FELIBERTY, and MARSHALL.

RAFAEL DAVILA was allegedly responsible for the planning of and transportation to each targeted theft – using his vehicle, determining price values for stolen converters and purchasing needed materials. He regularly purchased large quantities of blades designed to be used with a reciprocating power saw as well as cut resistant gloves which, according to surveillance footage, appear identical to those worn by the thieves.

Surveillance footage, communications and location monitoring data obtained from the defendants' cell phones and Davila's vehicle, identified that the defendants were allegedly involved in the theft of catalytic converters from at least 471 vehicles across Massachusetts and New Hampshire in 2022 and 2023 alone. It is believed that a significant number of additional thefts have not been identified or were not ever reported to law enforcement, however. It is alleged that, on numerous occasions, the defendants targeted more than 10 vehicles in a single night, with one night reporting thefts from 26 vehicles.

Once in possession of the stolen catalytic converters, the crew would then allegedly sell them to defendant JOSE TORRES, who would accumulate stolen catalytic converters from multiple theft crews and then in turn sell them to scrap dealers in the Northeast. In particular, TORRES allegedly sold stolen catalytic converters to scrap dealers who have since been charged federally for interstate transportation of stolen property and money laundering, including Alexander Kolitsas and Downpipe Depot charged in the District of Connecticut, as well as DG Auto, a New Jersey based company charged in the Eastern District of California and Northern District of Oklahoma. Torres is alleged to have transacted approximately \$30,000 to \$80,000 in stolen catalytic converters per week to these entities.



*Massachusetts State Police photo.*

Through use of digital pricing applications, and communication with the core buyers, TORRES allegedly provided prices to DAVILA and other theft crews based on the make and model of the vehicle and by the code on the catalytic converter. Knowing the prices of the most valuable converters, DAVILA and his crew would seek out those makes and models to target.

Torres then negotiated with the core buyer and delivered the catalytic converters to their facility. It is alleged that Torres is known to have sold and transported thousands of stolen catalytic converters to scrap dealers in the Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York and New Jersey areas.

In addition to the prolific number of catalytic converter thefts, it is alleged that RAFAEL DAVILA, FELIBERTY, and OYOLA also conspired to steal from ATMs of federally insured banks in Massachusetts on three separate occasions in December 2022. It is alleged that this conspiracy involved date use of stolen trucks that they would use to rip the ATMs from the ground and gain access to the vault. DAVILA, FELIBERTY, and OYOLA also are alleged to have committed burglaries of two New Hampshire jewelry stores on Jan. 12, 2023. The combined total value of the jewelry stolen during the burglaries was determined to be over \$137,000, with each store facing approximately \$10,000 in costs to repair the resulting damage.

The charge of conspiracy to transport stolen property in interstate commerce provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of interstate transportation of stolen property provides for a sentence of up to 10 years, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of conspiracy to commit bank theft provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of bank theft provides for a sentence of up to 10 years, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000.

The charge of conspiracy to commit money laundering provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$500,000 or twice the value of the proceeds, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the



determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

More than 70 local police departments in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut contributed to this investigation through the submission of their investigations of catalytic converter thefts in their jurisdiction.

Teams located and seized the following items during the searches:

- \* Seven firearms;
- \* Six cars;
- \* Seven motorcycles;
- \* Two jet skis;
- \* A boat;
- \* A Can-Am Spyder (three-wheeled motorcycle);
- \* US currency;
- \* Narcotics; and
- \* More than 20 stolen catalytic converters.

The vehicles, motorcycles, jet skis, boat, and currency were seized as suspected proceeds of the crew's criminal enterprise. The attached video shows the seized vehicles, boats and motorcycles being towed to a State Police facility.

The investigation into the catalytic converter theft crew was led by the Massachusetts State Police Fusion Center."-  
Massachusetts State Police.