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**16 PEOPLE INDICTED IN “OPERATION PIT CREW” FOR 252 THEFTS OF VEHICLES, TIRES, RIMS AND CATALYTIC CONVERTERS
Bronx Crew Allegedly Committed as Many as Six Heists a Night**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark and New York City Police Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch today announced that 16 people have been variously charged in a 971-count indictment with stealing cars and valuable auto parts throughout the Bronx and the city, victimizing 252 vehicle owners.

District Attorney Clark said, “These defendants allegedly worked as fast as a racetrack pit crew in the dead of night, stealing cars, tires and rims, and catalytic converters worth more than \$1 million on the black market. All across the Bronx, people heading to work or school in the morning found their cars propped on crates, or an empty parking space, leaving them stranded and financially strained. Auto crime is devastating to our community, and I commend the NYPD Auto Crimes Unit and my prosecutors for putting the brakes on this crew.”

Police Commissioner Tisch said, “These 16 defendants, alleged affiliates of the notorious Trinitarios street gang, ran an auto theft ring that stole more than \$1 million in auto parts, victimizing 252 hardworking New Yorkers. “This takedown is a prime example of our precision policing strategy in action: following the data and leading skilled investigations. Thanks to this approach, auto theft in the Bronx is down more than 22% so far this year, which is helping drive a 10.5% year-to-date drop in major crime across the borough. I am grateful to our NYPD Auto Crime Unit investigators, who worked in coordination with our Warrants Section and the Bronx District Attorney’s Office to hold these criminals accountable and make a real difference in people’s lives.”

District Attorney Clark said nine of the 16 defendants were arrested and arraigned on April 28, 2026, and April 29, 2026, before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Lawrence Busching on varying degrees of Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, Grand Larceny, Auto Stripping, Criminal



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Mischief and Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle, as well as Petit Larceny and fourth-degree Conspiracy. They are due back in court on September 18, 2026.

According to the investigation, NYPD investigators established the identities of 14 people involved in 172 tires and rims thefts and 69 catalytic converter thefts from vehicles in almost every precinct in the Bronx, and in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, from August 2024 through June of 2025. Many of the crimes were captured on surveillance video showing a three-person crew exiting a stolen car, fully masked, with gloves, a car jack, and milk crates.

They would lift the target car and use power tools to take all four tires and rims off within a couple of minutes. They used public parking garages throughout the Bronx to store the stolen vehicles before and after the thefts, which occurred between midnight and 5 a.m.

The other two defendants were buyers of stolen catalytic converters which they sold on the black market. When police executed a search warrant on one of those defendant's home, they found a suitcase with \$116,000 in cash.

The total in stolen property was \$1.2 million. The 11 cars stolen from around the metropolitan area that were used by the defendants to haul away the tires and rims were recovered and returned to the owners or insurance companies over the course of the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Lawrence Rozenblum, Sam Arno, Kali King and Stephanos Tsarnas of the Trial Division, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Jessica Lupo, Deputy Chief in the Trial Division, James Brennan, Deputy Chief of the Trial Division and Theresa Gottlieb, Chief of the Trial Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Senior Investigative District Attorney Miriam Bell-Blair, Trial Preparation Assistant Jason Singer, Legal Writer Karla Leiva, Executive Assistant Kristal Reyes, Intelligence Analyst Alanna Lydeatte-Hepburn, Selena Ley, Director of the Digital Forensic Lab, BXDA Senior Detective Investigator Brendan Sullivan, and Jeffrey Moro for their assistance with the case.

District Attorney Clark thanked NYPD Auto Crime Unit Lieutenant William Dooley and Police Officers Benjamin Warren, Gabriel Espadas, Joseph Parisi for their work in the investigation. District Attorney Clark thanked Police Officer Juan Gomez, Detective April



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Maxwell, Sergeant Brandon Gembecki, and Inspector Daniel Campbell of the Auto Crimes Unit, as well as Deputy Chief John Potkay and Assistant Chief Benjamin Gurley of Patrol Borough Bronx for their assistance in the investigation.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.

Defendants:

- Wilbin Santana, 23, Bronx— electronic monitoring
- Juan Hernandez, 30, Bronx— awaiting arraignment
- Jose Diaz Medina, 26, Bronx— supervised release
- Elvin Andujar, 26, Bronx— \$7,500 cash, 15k bond 15k at 10%
- Yefry Tapia, 27, Bronx— supervised release
- Angel Guerra, 27, Bronx— supervised release
- Joalfred Luciano, 30, Bronx— supervised release
- Carlos Matos, 30, Bronx— unapprehended
- Carlos Aquino Batista, 30, Bronx— awaiting arraignment
- Yandel Reyes, 18, Bronx— supervised release
- Lizandro Espinal Lopez, 30, Bronx— unapprehended
- Tiaraliz Cruz Huertas, 21, Bronx— unapprehended
- Edward Orozco, 22, Yonkers— unapprehended
- Junior Buenos Rivas, 24, NY, NY— awaiting arraignment
- Wascar Gonzalez, 36, Queens— unapprehended
- Miguel Quesada, 32, Newark, NJ— awaiting extradition