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Indictment alleges man, 51, illegally towed hundreds of cars to be crushed without consent or proper documentation

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced the filing of a 117-count indictment against 51-year-old Carlos Lopez-Torres for allegedly trafficking stolen vehicles and making false statements on paperwork submitted to the Oregon Department of Transportation. Furthermore, it is alleged that Lopez-Torres is likely responsible for stealing more than 300 vehicles throughout Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington using a homemade tow truck and then collecting more than \$86,000 after he sold the vehicles to a scrap metal company, according to court documents.

The indictment charges Lopez-Torres with four counts of trafficking in stolen vehicles, four counts of unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, four counts of being in possession of a stolen vehicle, four counts of theft in the first degree, one count of acting as a vehicle dealer without a certificate, one count of conducting a motor vehicle dismantling business without a certificate, one count of false swearing with regards to a vehicle's registration and 98 counts of making a false statement about a vehicle's title or transfer.

According to court documents, Lopez-Torres started selling vehicles to the scrap metal company in July 2018 and continued to sell cars, illegally, through July 2, 2019.

During the investigation, Detective Travis Fields with the Portland Police Bureau's Detective Coordination Team determined that Lopez-Torres sold approximately 370 vehicles during that time and was paid \$86,328.20 from the scrap metal company.

For every vehicle Lopez-Torres sold, law enforcement determined that he removed the catalytic converter and sold that component separately to another company, according to court documents.

When Lopez-Torres sold the vehicles to the scrap metal company, he used the name "Carlos Towing LLC," and made false statements regarding the ownership of those vehicles, according to court documents.

According to an affidavit of probable cause: his business is not registered with the City of Portland. Neither Lopez-Torres nor his business have a towing license, a dismantler's license or a vehicle dealer's license issued by the State of Oregon. Additionally, neither he nor his business are contracted with the City of Portland to tow vehicles upon request.

Law enforcement determined Lopez-Torres brought nearly every vehicle he had stolen to the scrap yard using a homemade tow truck that consisted of a red pickup with a hydraulic boom installed in the bed of the truck. The vehicle did not have any safety gear or an improved breaking system, court documents state. The vehicle did not have any company name or signage.

According to court documents, Lopez-Torres paid others a \$70 "vehicle finder's fee" after they located a vehicle for him to tow.

"It is believed that the vast majority of the over 370 vehicles towed by [Lopez-Torres] and sold...were in fact stolen by the defendant from where he located the vehicles parked throughout Portland and Vancouver," Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Kevin Demer, who is prosecuting this case, alleged in court documents.

During the investigation, law enforcement located several text messages in which Lopez-Torres was told where various cars were parked on the side of the road throughout the metro. Some of these text messages included photos of the cars on the roadside, according to court documents.

On July 2, 2019, law enforcement located and arrested Lopez-Torres in the 5900 block of Northeast 60th Avenue in Portland, Oregon and arrested him.

An indictment is only an accusation of a crime. Lopez-Torres is innocent unless and until proven guilty.

#MCDA#

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