

Jul 13, 2020

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## **Florida Attorney General's Office News Release**

### **5 Arrested in Connection to Crimes at Car Dealership**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution, in coordination with the Florida Highway Patrol, identified a dealership in Broward County and Osceola County involved in a complex fraud scheme. Investigators established that the criminal enterprise, operating out of Auto Sports of South Florida, engaged in a scheme to fraudulently take possession of vehicles and apply for duplicate titles by utilizing fictitious documents and methods. So far, law enforcement arrested five suspects in the scheme with two arrests pending.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Purchasing a new car is an exciting time and milestone for many. The process of car ownership should never involve consumers worrying about the legitimacy of their new purchase. These scammers fraudulently took possession of vehicles and created fake documents to obtain titles, all to make a dishonest dollar at the expense of consumers. I'm proud to have my Office of Statewide Prosecution partner with FHP and local law enforcement to take these criminals down."

According to the multi-agency investigation, members of the criminal organization submitted documents, including fraudulent power of attorney documents, to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles making it appear as though the financing for the fraudulently obtained vehicles was paid in full and the loans satisfied.

The investigation revealed that the fraudulent documents allowed members of the group to obtain duplicate titles to the cars. Because the duplicate titles appeared legitimate, the members of the criminal organization, including the owner of Auto Sports of South Florida, were able to sell the cars to others, including good faith purchasers for a large profit. The investigation took place over a span of 12 months and involved seven Florida counties.

The suspects, David Cruz, Janine Eid, Nickelson Fervil, Pedro Negret, Nigil Parker, Mark Solomon and Reynold Vergara, are charged with 51 counts of offenses that include racketeering, grand theft, identity theft, money laundering and insurance fraud. Cruz, Eid, Fervil, Parker and Solomon were all arrested last week. Arrest warrants for Negret and Vergara are pending.

If convicted, the defendants face up to 30 years in prison for each of the numerous first-degree felonies charged. Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the case.