INCIDENT: Operation Fencing February

LOCATION: Fremont Police Department, 2000 Stevenson Blvd. (see below for more information)

DATE/TIME: Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 3:30 p.m.

On Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 3:30 p.m. the Police Department held a press conference with the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office to announce recent arrests and charges connected with large scale fencing operations in the Bay Area. The Department has prioritized investigating fencing operations, as they are the primary funding source for the auto burglary epidemic that has hit the Bay Area hard in recent years.

During the month of January and February, Fremont Detectives disrupted several new fencing ring operations in the Bay Area. During these operations approximately 2,200 suspected stolen electronic devices were recovered with an estimated value of over $1.5 million. In addition, Detectives seized $100,000 in cash, $148,000 in a bank accounts, as well as a 2015 Mercedes S550 AMG, 2019 Mercedes G43 AMG, 2015 Maserati, 2013 BMW 328, 2013 Porsche Panamera and a 2008 Lexus SUV, all believed to be purchased with profits from stolen iPhones, laptops and other electronic devices taken during the commission of auto burglaries. 11 suspects have been charged, 10 by the Santa Clara County District Attorney and one by the San Mateo County District Attorney.

Attached is a summary of the investigation.
In October of 2019, FPD Detectives served multiple search warrants culminating a 7-month investigation into a large-scale fencing operation being run by Torspin Wireless in Hayward, Ca. The investigation resulted in eight arrests, recovery of 1,800 electronic devices and a seizure of approximately $350,000. In January of 2020, FPD learned that Torspin had re-opened their business and were trying to re-establish their business. On 02/04/20 Investigators conducted a business inspection based on compliance with California second-hand dealer laws and found numerous violations. After follow up with the store owner, Torspin is in the process of shutting down for good.
THU VAN HO    THAN NGUYEN

FPD received a tip that a business called iTek Mobile Care, located at 60 N 13th Street in San Jose, was part of a larger laptop fencing operation and were in possession of numerous stolen laptops. Additional intelligence was obtained that iTek was getting the laptops from Carlos Paz, a well-known laptop fence out of San Francisco that was arrested in early 2018 by FPD. On 01/21/20 FPD Detectives conducted an undercover operation where stolen phones were sold to the business. A search warrant was later served at the business and numerous suspected stolen laptops were located. The owner of the business, Thu Van Ho (known as Kevin), and his associate Than Nguyen were arrested for possession of stolen property. When the case was finished a total of 549 suspected stolen electronic devices were recovered in addition to multiple backpacks. Over $31,000 in currency was also seized. The owner of iTek had been trained overseas on how to work on and repair laptops. Evidence obtained during the course of the investigation showed that he was wiping laptops of user information and putting them into IT mode. Statements obtained during interviews indicated iTek was shipping the laptops in bulk via a bus line to Los Angeles and from there to Vietnam. Sorting through evidence led to multiple leads on additional laptop fences in the Bay Area. Thu Van Ho and Than Nguyen have been charged by the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office.

JOSUE PEREIRA

Pereira was a known laptop fence that was closely associated to the large laptop fencing ring taken down by the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office on 01/23/20. After weeks of surveillance we identified Pereira’s storage unit in Daly City and Pereira’s true address in San Francisco. After sharing information with SMCO a joint operation day planned. On 01/23 FPD Detectives followed Pereira into Daly City where a stop was conducted. Located inside his vehicle was 7 electronic devices. A follow up search at his storage unit resulted in the recovery of 33 suspected stolen electronic devices along with additional stolen property. Evidence indicated he was sending the stolen laptops to Vietnam. Pereira has been charged by the San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office.
On 02/07/20 FPD conducted surveillance on Carlos Paz at the Oakland Flea Market. After witnessing a meeting in the parking lot FPD attempted to stop Paz near the on-ramp to 880. Paz fled from officers and his vehicle was later involved in a traffic collision in Oakland. Paz and his associates fled prior to police arrival. A search of the vehicle resulted in the discovery of 41 suspected stolen laptops, 11 iPads, 30 cell phones and 8 digital cameras. Intelligence obtained suggests Paz fled to southern California. On 02/27 FPD Detectives conducted a probation search at Paz’s residence and seized his white BMW. Carlos Paz has been charged by the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office.

On 02/20/20 Detectives were conducting surveillance on Brayan Burgos and Ernesto Guevarra, both of which traveled to Gilroy in separate vehicles. Once in Gilroy, they met in a parking lot at the Gilroy Outlets with a minivan, which was determined to be a rental vehicle driven by Andy Nguyen. Detectives watched as items were moved from Burgos’ Mercedes into the Nguyen’s minivan. Shortly thereafter several of the suspects got into the minivan together and Detectives moved in to detain the suspects. A total of five suspects were detained and later arrested when Detectives discovered 160 suspected stolen Apple Macbook’s inside the minivan and another 150 suspected stolen Apple Macbook’s inside Guevara’s Lexus SUV. A follow up search resulted in the discovery and seizure of $100,000 in cash located hidden in the trunk of Burgos’ Mercedes.

Detectives conducted follow up search warrants and two known storage units located in Oakland. These searches resulted in the discovery of over 1,000 suspected stolen laptops, cell phones, digital cameras, and other electronics.

Follow up interviews and additional evidence was collected which led Detectives to the location of the U-Haul truck in West Oakland. Upon searching the U-Haul truck Detectives discovered approximately 500 suspected stolen laptops, cameras, cell phones and other electronics.
To date, Detectives had recovered approximately 2,200 suspected stolen electronic devices with an estimated value of over $1.5 million, seized $100,000 in cash, another $148,000 in a bank account in addition to a 2015 Mercedes S550 AMG, 2019 Mercedes G43 AMG, 2015 Maserati, 2013 BMW 328, 2013 Porsche Panamera and a 2008 Lexus SUV. Brayan Burgos, Ernesto Guevara, Edward Burgos, Fernando Ramos and Andy Nguyen have been charged by the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office.

**ISMAEL MURILLO**

On 02/26/20 FPD Detectives served a search and arrest warrant at the residence of Ismael Murillo. Murillo was arrested on his outstanding warrant from the Sunnyvale case and his involvement in the large laptop fencing conspiracy. Ismael Murillo was charged by the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office.

**TOMMY BUI**

On 03/02, after receiving information that previous laptop fence Tommy Bui was back at it, FPD Detectives conducted a probation search at his residence on Orlando Drive in San Jose. A search of residence resulted in the discovery of four suspected stolen Tumi backpacks, one of which has been confirmed from an auto burglary in May of 2019 in San Jose. Additional evidence was discovered on Bui’s phone that showed Macbook price lists dated in November and December of 2019. Tommy Bui was found to be related by marriage to Andy Nguyen, a recently arrested laptop fence. Tommy Bui has been charged by the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office.
For inquiries about the recovery of stolen property, for incidents that occurred between July 19, 2019 – January 20, 2020, please email LaptopRecovery@fremont.gov. Due to the significant number of laptops recovered, you must provide the serial number of your laptop in the email. We are unable to search for laptops without a serial number.

Anyone with additional information about this or any other laptop fencing ring, please contact Detective Rick Zemlok at Rzemlok@fremont.gov.

Anonymous tips can be submitted via Nixle. To send a web tip, go to https://local.nixle.com/tip/alert/5788118 or text your tip, by typing TIP FREMONTPD followed by your short message to 888777.
Benjamin Pham, 44, San Jose
Huong Tran, 31, San Jose
Cinthia Martinez, 38, San Francisco
Rony Martinez, 34, San Francisco
Hung On, 51, San Jose
Carlos Paz, 28, San Francisco
Marvin Paz, 33, San Francisco
Luan Huynh, 30, San Jose
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 31, 2018

Incident: Conspiracy, Possession of Stolen Property and Excessive Takings Enhancement

CONTACT:
Geneva Bosques
Public Affairs Manager
510-790-6957
Gbosques@fremont.gov

Investigation into multi-million dollar international fencing and burglary ring

In response to a dramatic spike in Bay Area auto burglaries, Fremont Police launched a regional investigation resulting in 9 arrests and millions of dollars in recovered property. Over the last two months, Fremont detectives uncovered a massive international fencing scheme in the Bay Area. The investigation began in late 2017 as detectives were conducting follow up to several auto burglaries taking place in commercial shopping centers along the I880 corridor in Fremont. As a result of an approximate 35% increase in theft from autos during 2017, several department resources were directed at the rising crime.

During an undercover surveillance operation on December 8, 2017, property crimes detectives were led to a storage facility in San Jose, California. At the location, detectives observed suspects loading suspected stolen electronic devices into a large storage container commonly used to ship freight overseas. Detectives seized and searched the container, discovering more than 900 stolen electronic devices (laptops and tablets). The estimated $1 million in stolen property was intended for shipment to Vietnam.

A careful investigation revealed a highly sophisticated multi-million dollar fencing scheme operating in the Bay Area. Street-level criminal suspects, many of them members of validated street gangs, were found to be breaking and entering parked vehicles in cities throughout the Bay Area to steal laptops, smart phones and tablets. It was determined that the conspiracy was centralized in Santa Clara County. Detectives consulted with the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Crime Strategies Unit, who assisted in authoring warrants and high bail affidavits for the large scale pre-planned operation, throughout the investigation.

On January 25, 2018, detectives organized a multi-location operation to serve seven search warrants around the Bay Area. With the assistance of United States Customs Airport Division, two of the targets were stopped as they attempted to board a flight to Vietnam. The two suspects had 18 items of luggage containing more than 300 suspected stolen electronic devices. Detectives recovered an additional 700+ items of suspected stolen property and arrested seven additional suspects on the day of the operation at the suspect locations.

The total recovered loss at this point in our investigation is estimated to be approximately $2 million.
In collaboration with the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office, eight of the suspects were charged with multiple felony counts including conspiracy, possession of stolen property and an excessive takings enhancement. The ninth suspect was arrested and released.

This case remains open and ongoing. Detectives are continuing to identify the additional suspects responsible for breaking and entering into vehicles in our City.

Arrestees (booking photos attached):

Carlos Paz, 28, of San Francisco  
Huong Tran, 31, of San Jose  
Benjamin Pham, 44, of San Jose  
Luan Huynh, 30, of San Jose  
Hung On, 51, of San Jose  
Cinthia Martinez, 38, of San Francisco  
Marvin Paz, 33, of San Francisco  
Rony Martinez, 34, of San Francisco

Anyone with information about this case is asked to please contact the Fremont Police General Crimes Unit at 510-790-6900 or email Detective A. Stillitano at AStillitano@fremont.gov. We will also accept anonymous tip by text. Text TIP FREMONTPD followed by your message to 888-777, or via the web at https://local.nixle.com/tip/alert/6216337.

# # #
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Incident:** Major Theft/Stolen Property Fencing Operation

**Report Number:** 190612011

**Location:** Multiple Locations

**Date/Time of Incident:** October 25, 2019

Detectives finish seven-month investigation by arresting several suspects in large-scale fencing operation.

On October 25, 2019, the Fremont Police Department served eight simultaneous search warrants in the Bay Area (four in Hayward, one in San Lorenzo, one in San Francisco) and two in El Cajon, California which involved the participation and coordination of nine law enforcement agencies and two private companies.

The warrants were the culmination of a 7-month investigation involving a business in Hayward called Torspin Wireless. As part of ongoing efforts to combat the rise in auto burglaries involving the loss of electronics, investigators developed information that Torspin Wireless was the largest electronics fence for stolen property in the Bay Area. Through hundreds of hours of surveillance, Detectives were able to confirm the business was conducting illegal activity and their methods were actually driving crime in the region, specifically robberies of high end cellular phones and auto burglaries.

In August of this year, the Oakland Police Department and the Alameda County District Attorney’s Office culminated the investigation of two Oakland based robbery crews stealing new phones, primarily iPhones, from FedEx and UPS trucks. In total, that investigation involved 62 robberies or grand thefts in 31 cities across 10 counties with a retail loss of $987,000. A total of 12 suspects were arrested. These same suspects were surveilled by law enforcement selling the stolen phones to Torspin Wireless almost immediately after several of the robberies. Press release:

[https://www.alcoda.org/newsroom/2019/sep/cell_phone_robbery](https://www.alcoda.org/newsroom/2019/sep/cell_phone_robbery)

Through the course of this lengthy investigation, Detectives learned Torspin Wireless was working with and being financed by another business called MJ Wireless in El Cajon, California. Detectives conducted multiple surveillance operations and eight undercover buy/sell operations between the two stores. During the operations, undercover detectives sold a total of 145 reported stolen phones for over $45,000 dollars to the stores.

On October 25, 2019, undercover detectives coordinated the sale of 900 stolen iPhone 11’s, with a retail value of $1.3 million to MJ Wireless and Torspin Wireless. During this final operation a total of eight suspects were arrested, several of which were armed at the time. Detectives recovered approximately $350,000 is cash, 1,800 electronic devices, four firearms (two shotguns and two handguns) and evidence indicating the vast majority of the phones were being shipped overseas to places such as Dubai, Vietnam, Mexico, China, Russia, Iran and many others.
“We are pleased with the results of this investigation,” said Fremont PD Lieutenant Michael Tegner. “However, these results could not have been achieved without the help of partner agencies throughout the state. We know these fencing operations and the high price they pay for cell phones drive the auto burglary epidemic in the Bay Area. We are hoping these arrests help to lower the crime rate.”

The Hayward Police Department, San Jose Police Department, Alameda County Sheriff’s Office, San Diego County Sheriff’s Office, Alameda County District Attorney’s Office, Internal Revenue Service, Silicon Valley Regional Computer Forensic Lab, and San Diego Regional Computer Forensic Lab assisted during this investigation.

This remains an open and ongoing investigation. At this time four of the eight suspects arrested on October 25th have been charged. Anyone with information is asked to please contact the Fremont Police Department’s Investigative Division (General Crimes) at 510-790-6900 or email Detective J. Roberts at Jroberts@fremont.gov. We will also accept anonymous tips. Text TIP FREMONTPD followed by your message to 888-777, or via the web at https://local.nixle.com/tip/alert/6216337.

Send an anonymous tip by texting TIP FREMONTPD followed by your message to 888-777, or via the web at https://local.nixle.com/tip/alert/6216337.

# # #