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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 5, 2015

Copper Caper



Kevin Colosimo



Ryan Nelson



Megan Gawel

Montgomery County District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman, Delaware County District Attorney Jack Whelan, Pennsylvania State Police Captain James Raykovitz, Abington Police Chief William Kelly, East Norriton Police Chief Karyl Kates, Limerick Police Chief William Albany and Pottstown Police Chief F. Richard Drumheller announce the arrests of Kevin Colosimo of Douglassville, PA, Ryan Nelson of Alden, PA and Megan Gawel of Newark, DE on charges of Criminal Conspiracy, Burglary, Arson, Theft and related charges.

In February, 2014, the Abington Township Fire Marshall contacted Montgomery County Detectives and Pennsylvania State Police to report a series of residential burglaries and arsons within his Township. The crimes bore similar characteristics, and information about these incidents was further disseminated to police and fire departments in Montgomery, Delaware and Bucks counties.

Investigators called on the Montgomery County Investigating Grand Jury to assist them solving this series of burglaries and arsons. At the conclusion of their investigation, the Grand Jury issued a Presentment. The Grand Jury learned that all of the burglaries took place in houses that were unoccupied and in some form of transition. All of the houses were owned by banks or holding companies or were otherwise part of an estate. All of the homes were listed for sale, and copper pipe had been stolen in each incident. Further, in several of the burglaries, the defendants ignited a fire by use of the kitchen stove.

In March, 2014, Nelson and Gawel were arrested for burglary in Spring Township, Berks County. Investigators learned that Colosimo eluded capture in this incident. During a search of the suspects' vehicle, police found burglary tools and handwritten notes that contained the street addresses of other homes that had been burglarized.

Investigators were able to obtain text messages on the defendants' phones, which tied them to some of the burglaries and arsons. Through computer forensics and testimony, the Grand Jury learned that the suspects searched for homes on Realtor.com and other internet sites. The actors then handwrote the addresses and/or entered the addresses into their cell phone GPS. An analysis of the internet searches and GPS address listings made by the suspects match the addresses of homes that were burglarized and burned. Moreover, a detailed graphic analysis of cell tower was conducted and site records confirmed the subjects were at or near each crime scene at the critical times. DA Risa Vetri Ferman said "as technology evolves so do the tools law enforcement has at its disposal to keep our community safe. Our ability to conduct historical cell site analysis was a critical component in the investigation."

The defendants are charged with incidents that occurred in Abington, East Norriton, Limerick and Pottstown in Montgomery County. They have also been charged with crimes committed in Swarthmore, Havertown, and Aston, Delaware County.

"These individuals placed money above the safety of others including the firefighters who responded," said District Attorney Jack Whelan. "I would like to commend the Montgomery County Office of the District Attorney who took the lead on the case and the detectives for their collaborative work on this expansive investigation into the facts and circumstances of a rash of residential burglaries and arsons across multiple jurisdictions that destroyed property and left communities in fear."

Captain James Raykovitz said "the will, tenacity and cooperation demonstrated by the investigators, using all available investigative tools, is a great example of law enforcement, working together, to hold criminals accountable."

The defendants were arrested this morning and were arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Edward Kropp, Sr. Bail on each defendant was set at \$1,000,000. Preliminary hearings are scheduled for February 27th at 10 AM before Judge Kropp at his Court located at 2093 East High Street in Pottstown.

Approved for release

Risa Vetri Ferman

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.