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## **Press Release**

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Friday, March 17, 2023

### **HUDSON SHERIFF'S OFFICE HELPS RECOVER 23 STOLEN VEHICLES HEADED FOR WEST AFRICA**

A joint task force that includes the Hudson County Sheriff's Office recovered 23 stolen vehicles — valued at more than \$1.3 million — that were headed for West Africa, Hudson County Sheriff Frank Schillari announced.

The seizure was the result of a five-day "Operation Terminus" between Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Port of New York/Newark last month.

The probe that targeted the flow of stolen vehicles being shipped out of the United States was conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, the New Jersey State Police, the New York Police Department (NYPD) Auto Crime Unit, the Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) - Criminal Investigation Bureau, and the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

The recovered vehicles, which were destined for Western African countries Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Monrovia and Liberia, have an estimated value slightly more than \$1.3 million, Schillari said. Additionally, 109 rounds of various caliber ammunition were found concealed in a vehicle destined for Nigeria.

"This was an excellent example of the effectiveness of our combined efforts to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations that target our citizens as well as our nation's borders, and hopefully serves as a warning to those exporting stolen vehicles that law enforcement is actively monitoring and taking action to disrupt their criminal enterprise," Schillari said.

"Thank you to the great men and women from my office, as well as Homeland Security and Customs agents, for their hard work and once again proving their dedication to deterring transnational criminal activities."

The effort to dismantle transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) the Auto Export Crimes Task Force was created.

"Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) will continue to work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners to stop criminal activity impacting our communities and prevent the flow of profits going to the organizations behind the crimes," said Ricky J. Patel, Special Agent in Charge for HSI Newark.

"Operation Terminus is an initiative to target stolen vehicles being exported out of the United States and once interdicted, identify and investigate the perpetrators responsible for the criminal networks behind these stolen vehicles, oftentimes leading to other crimes being committed and negatively affecting our neighborhoods."