



Sheriff Mike Adkinson

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Sheriff Ed Spooner

Three people are in custody as investigators with law enforcement agencies across Northwest Florida begin dismantling the workings of an organized, aggressive theft ring operating in our region and beyond.

As a result of their coordinated efforts, numerous burglary charges are pending against three men taken into custody Friday, February 12th in Mobile Alabama. The three are believed responsible for stealing at least 600-thousand dollars worth of construction and high-end lawn maintenance equipment from area businesses since December .

Additional charges are pending as the scope of the suspects activity is identified.

The investigation was sparked in early January when investigators and crime intelligence analysts from the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and Walton County Sheriff's Office began cooperating on solving high-value thefts with similar patterns. Within a week of identifying a possible suspect, the burglary group was active in Thomasville, Georgia, and Tallahassee and Leon County, Florida.

The probe eventually expanded to include a cooperative regional effort dubbed "Operation U-Haul" that includes the Bay County Sheriff's Office, Leon County Sheriff's Office, Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, Fort Walton Beach Police Department, Panama City Beach Police Department, Panama City Police Department, Tallahassee Police Department, Thomasville Georgia Police Department, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, State Attorney Offices in the 1st, 2nd, and 14th Judicial Circuits, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement or ICE.

The mode of operation was to focus on stealing large amounts of high-priced construction equipment such as heavy duty trucks, a bobcat, air tool hammers, and the like. Investigators say some weapons were also stolen during the heists. Investigators also say the suspects took the stolen items out of state. Some details of the case will not be released at this time due to the ongoing nature of the investigation.

The Okaloosa and Walton Sheriff's Offices want to express their gratitude for the hard work and invaluable assistance provided to date by the many participating law enforcement agencies.



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Those arrested so far are:

30-year old Jorge Alberto Ortega-Calderson of
2237 Monahan Court, Fort Walton Beach

24-year old Gerald Roches of 2237 Monahan
Court, Fort Walton Beach

36-year old Francisco Javier Bonilla of 2237
Monahan Court, Fort Walton Beach

All three are currently in the Mobile County Jail
and have warrants in Okaloosa County for bur-
glary and grand theft.