



KITTITAS COUNTY

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Clay Myers, Sheriff

2/9/2024

Thwarted Burglary Near Ellensburg Part of Organized, Targeted Crime Trend

Around 7:30 pm on Tuesday February 6, a home in the Grasslands area of Kittitas County just east of Ellensburg was burglarized by three Hispanic males. Investigation has shown the crime was part of an organized ring of burglaries and thefts targeting the owners of Asian and Indian small businesses.

The owners of the home, on Quartz Mountain Drive, also own an Asian restaurant in Ellensburg. They were away from home when their motion-activated security cameras showed two unknown, masked men inside the house. They called 911 and Kittitas County Sheriff's Deputies responded within minutes.

The first arriving deputy saw a grey Audi SUV leaving the area of the reported burglary. When the marked patrol vehicle appeared, the Audi drove fast and dangerously away before suddenly stopping, halfway in a ditch. When three Hispanic men got out of the car, the deputy attempted to detain them, but the men fled on foot into the surrounding residential and agricultural neighborhood.

KCSO Deputies, EPD Officers, and WSP Troopers searched the area by vehicle, on foot, and with a night-vision equipped drone. They were assisted by numerous reported sightings of possible suspects from residents in the area, but no suspects were located. Evidence indicates they were likely picked up by another suspect vehicle while the search was underway.

The suspect Audi and its contents were seized as evidence. Inside the vehicle, detectives recovered all the property believed missing from the victim's residence along with other evidence including DNA and electronics.

Information gathered from cell phones left in the car and conversations with other agencies lead investigators to believe this criminal crew is not local. They appear to have California connections and to have also targeted homes in other areas including the Tri-cities.

Burglaries targeting the residences of owners of Asian and Indian restaurants and nail salons are a known, nationwide scourge, but this is the first known incident in Kittitas County. Dozens of homes of Asian and Indian restaurant and salon owners were burglarized last year in western Washington up and down the I-5 corridor. The Sheriff's Office is working with other local and federal agencies already investigating this series of crimes and will add the significant evidence collected in this incident to those larger investigations.



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The Sheriff's Office is also working with other local Law Enforcement agencies to directly contact and alert the business owners in our community who closely fit the profile of this organized crime ring.

We recommend that all homeowners follow the precautions against burglary that are always a good idea:

- Lock doors and windows and activate security alarms. Alarm systems have become affordable and easy to install; if you don't have one, consider it.
- Secure valuables in a bolted-down safe if kept in the home.
- Turn on exterior lights and consider motion-activated lighting. Create the appearance that someone is always at home.
- Talk with your neighbors and ask for their help reporting suspicious activity.

We will share further information as we learn and confirm it in this ongoing investigation.

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