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PRESS RELEASE

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DA McMahon: ‘Ninja Burglar’ Apprehended and Arraigned

*** Robert Costanzo charged with 3 burglaries committed during infamous crime spree ***

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon today announced that ROBERT COSTANZO, the “Ninja Burglar” whose crime spree lasted from 2005 to 2015 and sprawled across three states, was arraigned on three counts of Burglary in the Second Degree.

“Mr. Costanzo, better known as the ‘Ninja Burglar,’ has admitted to burglarizing more than 100 homes in Staten Island over the past decade. Additionally, he also targeted wealthy enclaves in upstate New York, New Jersey and Connecticut,” said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon. “A tally of reports filed by victims reveals the defendant made off with more than \$4 million in goods, including cash, jewelry, watches, and other items, during his criminal career. More shocking than how much property the defendant made off with is just how brazen he was. In a number of the cases reviewed with Mr. Costanzo, he admits to slipping in and out of residences while his victims were home.”

McMahon continued: “My office has been in consultation with the locally assigned defense counsel and attorney of record on this matter and, with his approval, I can announce that we fully expect the defendant to plead guilty tomorrow to a Superior Court Information. The parameters of that sentence will be disclosed at that time. Although he has admitted to committing more than 100 burglaries, unfortunately we are prohibited from bringing charges for many of those cases due to the statute of limitations. However, I want the people of Staten Island, and particularly the residents of Grymes Hill, Emerson Hill, Todt Hill, Lighthouse Hill, Castleton Corners, Silver Lake, West Brighton and Grasmere, to rest assured knowing that the Ninja Burglar case has finally been solved and that his reign of terror is officially over. I want to thank Lieutenant Kevin Gallagher, Detective Steven Greco and ADA David Frey for their dedication to cracking this case. I also want to acknowledge and thank our partners in law enforcement in the various jurisdictions that assisted with this extensive, investigative undertaking.”

According to the three-count Criminal Court complaint, other documents filed in court and an extensive investigation by the RCDA NYPD Detective Squad and the RCDA Investigations Bureau, COSTANZO is responsible for committing burglaries at the following residences:

1. 177 Benedict Rd., on Nov. 8, 2011;
2. 66 Jenna Lane, on Jan. 3, 2013; and
3. 16 Coldspring Court, on April 3, 2015.

COSTANZO was identified as the suspect following an 18-month investigation that began in October 2014, when Lt. Kevin Gallagher, Det. Steven Greco, and Det. Robert Nestel, members of the NYPD assigned to the RCDA Detective Squad, were investigating the “Ninja Burglar” pattern and attended a meeting of law enforcement officials from New Jersey and New York all investigating a similar pattern.

By happenstance, they spoke to a detective from Saratoga Springs, NY, who advised them that her department was investigating a similar residential burglary pattern and that the main suspect was a Staten Island resident – COSTANZO.

After comparing the Saratoga cases to the Staten Island cases, Lt. Gallagher and Det. Greco realized that the burglary patterns were strikingly similar. Together with ADA David Frey, Deputy Chief of the RCDA Investigations Bureau, Lt. Gallagher, Det. Greco, and members of the RCDA NYPD detective squad embarked on a confidential investigation into COSTANZO utilizing a variety of conventional and unconventional investigative resources, including physical and electronic surveillance. They gathered sufficient information to obtain and execute a number of search warrants on Staten Island, which led to evidence linking COSTANZO to numerous past Staten Island burglaries.

As the case developed, it became clear that COSTANZO’s criminal activity expanded beyond Staten Island and Saratoga Springs. Other jurisdictions that were ensnared in his burglary spree included Colonie, NY; Saddle River, NJ; Holmdel, NJ; Deal, NJ and Farmington, CT.

On February 26, 2016, Lt. Gallagher, Det. Greco, and ADA Frey met with COSTANZO and his attorney in the Connecticut State Attorney’s Office, spoke to them, and worked out the details of what would become a universal plea agreement covering crimes committed in three states.

On April 14 and 15, 2016, defendant COSTANZO gave a lengthy video statement about his role in these burglaries, and admitted to being the person known as the “Ninja Burglar.”

In sum and substance, COSTANZO:

- Admitted to committing a majority of the burglaries in the pattern, remarking that he did more than 100 burglaries on Staten Island.
- Revealed intimate details about break-ins that were not reported in the media, including means of entrance and exit, as well as lists of removed items.
- Detailed how he targeted homes under the cover of darkness and would strike on any day of the week to avoid developing a pattern.
- Recalled in vivid detail how he narrowly avoided capture in October 2008 after being caught breaking into a home on Beebe Street. COSTANZO recounted how he eluded police searching the woods behind the Michael J. Petrides School.

On April 18, 2016, a criminal court complaint was filed in Richmond County Criminal Court, and a New York State warrant for his arrest was issued.

On April 19, 2016, COSTANZO pled guilty to a Robbery he committed in Connecticut, and was thereafter extradited from Connecticut to New York.

This morning, COSTANZO was arraigned on a Criminal Court complaint and tomorrow he is expected to plead guilty to a Superior Court Information for three burglaries, which will cover his role in the “Ninja Burglar” pattern on Staten Island.

The investigation into COSTANZO’s criminal history continues, and as more details become available those will be shared with the public when appropriate, and legally permissible.

The Richmond County District Attorney’s Office would like to thank our following law enforcement partners in coming to this conclusion:

NYPD: Chief of Detectives William Boyce
Executive Officer Michael Baldessano
Inspector Joseph Veneziano, C.O. of DBSI

Connecticut: State Attorney Gail P. Hardy
Assistant State’s Attorney David Zagaja
Det. Sgt. Sean Bailey, Farmington Police Department
Investigator John Betz, Hartford State Attorney’s Office

Albany: District Attorney P. David Soares
Assistant District Attorney Matthew Hauf
Colonie Police Chief Jonathan Teale
Det. Stephen Donovan, Colonie Police Department
Lt. Robert Winn, Colonie Police Department, Investigations Division

Saratoga: District Attorney Karen A. Heggen
Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Buckley
Lt. Shane Crooks, Saratoga Police Department

Bergen: Acting Prosecutor Gurbir Grewal
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney David Calviello
Lt. Christopher Stefanacci, Bergen County Prosecutor’s Office
Det. Sgt. Timothy Gerity, Saddle River Police Department

Monmouth: Acting Prosecutor Christopher J. Gramiccioni
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Christopher Decker
Lt. Keith Cannata, Holmdel Police Department
Sgt. W. Hulse and Det. Daniel Kobil, Deal Police Department
Det. David Graminski and Capt. M. McGlennon, Long Branch Police Department

Additionally, the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office would like to recognize the late Sgt. Francis “Buddy” Murnane of the NYPD, who, for a number of years, spearheaded the task force on this crime spree.

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COSTANZO was arraigned on a criminal court complaint in Richmond Criminal Court, St. George before Judge Raymond Rodriguez. He was ordered remanded. Tomorrow he is scheduled to plead guilty to a Superior Court Information in Staten Island Supreme Court, St. George.

The case is being prosecuted by ADA David Frey, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau.

The investigation was handled by Detective Steven Greco and Lt. Kevin Gallagher, commanding officer of the NYPD RCDA Detective Squad.

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Defendant Information:

Robert Costanzo

D.O.B. 11/3/69

SI NY

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