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PRESS RELEASE

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DA McMahon: ‘Ninja Burglar’ Sentenced to 22 Years in Prison

*** Robert Costanzo admitted to committing more than 100 burglaries on Staten Island 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 sentenced to 22 years in prison after previously pleading guilty to three counts of Burglary in the Second Degree, a class C violent felony, contained in a Superior Court Information.

Costanzo, 46, was sentenced today by Justice Stephen J. Rooney in Richmond County State Supreme Court, St. George. The defendant was sentenced to concurrent 11 year prison terms on two counts of Burglary in the Second Degree. Additionally, Judge Rooney sentenced the defendant to 11 years in prison on an additional count of Burglary in the Second Degree to run consecutive to the other 11-year terms, for a total of 22 years in prison.

“Mr. Costanzo, better known as the ‘Ninja Burglar’, admitted to committing more than 100 burglaries in Staten Island, eluding authorities for a decade while expanding his infamous crime spree to other states,” said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon. “The substantial prison sentence handed down today finally puts an end to a terrifying chapter for the residents of Grymes Hill, Emerson Hill, Todt Hill, Lighthouse Hill, Castleton Corners, Silver Lake, West Brighton and Grasmere. Now, they can rest assured knowing that Mr. Costanzo is securely behind bars. I want to particularly thank Lieutenant Kevin Gallagher, Detective Steven Greco and ADA's David Frey (now Judge) and Gregg Brown for their dedication to cracking this case and bringing about justice and this victory for the people of Staten Island. I also want to acknowledge and thank our partners in law enforcement in the various jurisdictions that assisted with this extensive, investigative undertaking.”

Following an extensive investigation by the RCDA NYPD Detective Squad and the RCDA Investigations Bureau, **Costanzo** pled guilty to three burglaries this past April which covered his role in the “Ninja Burglar” pattern on Staten Island. He 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.

Although the defendant has admitted to committing more than 100 burglaries, authorities are prohibited from bringing charges for many of those cases due to the statute of limitations.

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 former ADA David Frey, 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.

Today, he was sentenced to 22 years in prison for the Staten Island burglaries. The universal plea agreement will be concurrent to jail terms in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Albany and Saratoga counties. The defendant is still awaiting sentencing in other jurisdictions.

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 Baldassano
Inspector Joseph Veneziano

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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The case is being prosecuted by ADA Gregg Brown. 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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