

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

DEFENDANT SENTENCED IN CHOP SHOP OPERATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that Christian Giovanni Cruz, age 23 of Salinas, was sentenced to felony probation on a charge of operating a chop shop in Salinas. A chop shop is any location where a person engages in altering, destroying, disassembling, or storing a motor vehicle known to have been obtained illegally in order to sell or dispose of the parts or to otherwise alter, deface or destroy vehicle identification information.

On August 6, 2015 a citizen called the Salinas Police Department to report an abandoned and stripped Honda Civic in the area of St. Charles Way in Salinas. The car had been reported stolen three days before. Officers noted tire and gouge marks on the road that led them to a nearby residence where Mr. Cruz was located. Several cars were located in the driveway of the residence. Mr. Cruz was covered in oil and grease. Several engine parts were lying on the ground. During the investigation, Officers located several car parts connected to the Honda in the driveway leading to the back yard including an alternator, a fuel pump, the distributor unit, the air conditioning unit, the front hood, the car doors, the headlights, and the car seats. Mr. Cruz admitted to using a handheld cutting device to cut up the Honda which was completely gutted.

Chop Shops are not uncommon in Monterey County. The District Attorney's Office-Economic Vehicle Theft Unit works in conjunction with the Monterey County Sheriff's Department Multi-Agency Detail for Commercial Auto Theft (MADCAT) in locating chop shops throughout the County. Members of the public having information concerning possible chop shops are encouraged to report such activity to MCSO Detective Arras Wilson at 831-755-7279, DA Investigator Maribel Torres-Hart at 831-883-7588 or the District Attorney's Office Fraud Hotline at 831-755-3224.

This case was investigated by Salinas Police Officer Oscar Dydasco.