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Serial Identity Thief Pleads Guilty

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that Andrew Nicholas Payan Knight (DOB 4/19/93), of Los Angeles, pled guilty to ten felony counts of conspiracy, identity theft, and grand theft. Knight admitted as true an aggravated white-collar crime enhancement and that he committed the offenses while released on bail. Knight’s convictions earlier today are the result of a joint investigation by the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office and Ventura County District Attorney’s Office Fraud and Technology Crimes Unit.

The investigation began in April 2020, when a Moorpark resident reported that someone used his identity to fraudulently lease two luxury vehicles, a Bentley and a Range Rover. Sheriff’s detectives traced the frauds to Knight and determined that he used the victim’s identity to fraudulently lease a \$5,700 per-month apartment in Westwood and open multiple credit accounts. In May 2020, Knight was arrested and charged with those offenses.

While investigating those crimes, Sheriff’s detectives discovered that in 2019, a San Diego resident filed a police report alleging nearly identical crimes to the Moorpark victim, including using the victim’s identity and credit to fraudulently lease multiple luxury apartment units and a second luxury vehicle. Subsequent investigation confirmed Knight committed these crimes and in July 2020, he was rearrested and charged in a second case.

Knight remained free on bond from August 2020 to January 2021. In January 2021, Sheriff's detectives arrested Knight a third time after their investigation confirmed he was still committing the same crimes despite being out on bail. Knight's scheme was to rent luxury apartments using others' identities so he could market the units as short-term vacation rentals. Knight would pocket the rent he collected from subtenants while paying no rent to the true owners of the luxury units. The cumulative unpaid rent on the units Knight fraudulently leased exceeded \$100,000. The three luxury vehicles Knight fraudulently leased were eventually returned to the dealerships.

Knight currently remains in custody in the Ventura County jail pending sentencing. The sentencing hearing is scheduled to occur on March 9, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 23 of the Ventura Superior Court. Knight is expected to be sentenced to state prison for a term of three to five years. He will also be ordered to pay restitution to his victims.

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The Ventura County District Attorney's Office is the public prosecutor for the county's 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and other professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.

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