



GREGORY D. TOTTE
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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Suspect Arraigned in Large-Scale Retail Theft Scheme

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today the filing of a criminal complaint against Peter Cuong Chi Nhan (DOB 05/22/1977) of El Monte. The complaint alleges nine felony counts of conspiracy, organized retail theft and grand theft. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the Simi Valley Police Department (SVPD).

The charges against Nhan relate to criminal activity known as “hard drive shucking.” In this scheme, the suspect purchases a new hard drive from a retail store. After leaving the store, the suspect removes the new hard drive from its packaging and replaces it with an old and worthless hard drive. The suspect then returns to the store, or visits another branch of the same retailer, and makes a fraudulent return of the worthless hard drive for cash.

The criminal investigation of Nhan began when Target Stores reported to SVPD that it had detected multiple returns of “shucked” hard drives to many of its Southern California stores, including locations in Ventura County. Target then provided surveillance video and records of the fraudulent transactions to police, which involved at least two unidentified suspects, one male and one female. SVPD later positively identified Nhan as the male suspect responsible for many of the hard drive purchases and fraudulent returns. Further, police determined during their investigation that Nhan also engaged in serial hard drive shucking thefts from other retailers including Walmart, Fry’s, and Best Buy.

SVPD determined Nhan would sell the stolen hard drives to a Carlsbad-based company that would then sell the drives through online channels to unwitting customers. Over several years, that company paid Nhan hundreds of thousands of dollars for hard drives he obtained through the shucking scheme described above.

Nhan was arrested on August 1, 2019 and posted \$20,000 bail. On August 16, 2019 he was arraigned and pleaded not guilty . The next scheduled hearing is an Early Disposition Conference on September 12, 2019. If convicted of all charges, Nhan faces a maximum custodial term of 8 years 4 months.

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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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