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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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## **THREE DEFENDANTS CHARGED IN MILLION DOLLAR AUTO THEFT SCHEME**

The Western Wayne Auto Theft team includes agents from Michigan State Police, Livonia Police Department, Detroit Police Department, Huron Township Police Department, and the Wayne County Sheriff. This multi-agency car theft task force has concluded an investigation that spanned over 16 months. The investigation culminated this week with the arrest and charging of Marlon Dewayne Carter, 36, Kevin Dion Ball, 31 and Kwame Sylvester, 35 of Detroit in a case involving 119 victims. [See attached chart of charges.]

The case was referred to the Western Wayne Auto Theft team by the Macomb County Auto Theft team. The Automobile Theft Prevention Authority funds the Western Wayne Auto Theft team, the Macomb County Auto Theft team and the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office Auto Theft Unit headed by Principal Attorney Rodney Hassinger.

The scheme used by the three men was discovered during a September 2006 investigation by the Macomb Auto Theft Squad and General Motors Investigator Henry Jackson. The case was referred to the Western Wayne Auto Theft Team when it was discovered that Carter, Ball and Sylvester were stealing cars in various Wayne County jurisdictions.

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The defendants would go “shopping” for cars they wanted to steal; usually these were General Motors products because an accomplice working at a car dealership was able to cut keys for them using the Vehicle Identification Number (“VIN”) supplied by the defendants. The cars were stolen simply by unlocking them and driving them away. They would sit for several days in a neighborhood on the east side of Detroit, while the defendants purchased junk cars similar to the stolen vehicles at auction. The stolen cars were then retagged with the “clean” VIN’s from the junk cars and sold by the defendants at local strip malls or on the street for approximately \$10,000.

The innocent purchasers had no way of knowing the cars were stolen. During the course of the investigation authorities found hundreds of rosette rivets that are used in the auto industry to attach the VIN to cars. Possession of rosette rivets is a four-year felony. It is estimated that Carter, Ball and Sylvester netted in excess of one million dollars from their car theft scheme.

The defendants are facing 569 felony charges as detailed on the attached document. Carter and Ball were previously arraigned and are each being held on one million dollar bond. Sylvester was also arraigned and is being held on \$10,000/10% bond. The preliminary examinations will be held at the 16<sup>th</sup> District Court, in Livonia on March 20, 2008.

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