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CAR THEFT IN THE UNITED STATES

The National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) each year takes a look at the national picture in terms of car thefts. Back in 1984 when NICB first started its annual Hot Spot reports, California still led the nation in overall car thefts, with 161,309 that year. New York led the nation in number of thefts per registrations at 1,303. The peak of car thefts was 1991 with 1.6 million cars stolen that year. The numbers have been dropping thanks to better automobile technology that makes it easier to track stolen vehicles and increased law enforcement resources on car thefts. For 2013, there were less than 700,000 vehicles stolen, a 58% decline since the peak 22 years ago.

BANGKOK, Thailand - The growing links between cybercrime and organized vehicle crime was the focus of an INTERPOL conference which brought together experts from law enforcement and the private sector. With the majority of modern vehicles equipped with a range of electronic devices such as sensors and infotainment systems, although useful for drivers and passengers this connectivity also presents increased opportunities for criminals attempting to gain access to steal data or sabotage a vehicle.

To address this issue, delegates acknowledged the need to develop strategic cooperation between the INTERPOL-coordinated vehicle expert network and internationally recognized cybercrime units in order to better meet the challenges of high-technology in modern motor vehicles. The 140 participants representing 46 countries, 20 private entities and five international organizations who attended the three-day (16 -18 February) INTERPOL Global Conference on Vehicle Crime also addressed the impact of illicit trade in spare parts and car trafficking routes.

With more than 7.2 million entries, INTERPOL's Stolen Motor Vehicles (SMV) database provides a unique global platform. In 2015 alone it was checked nearly 150 million times resulting in the identification of around 123,000 vehicles worldwide.

Most recently, the INTERPOL-coordinated operation Adwenpa undertaken to strengthen border controls along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor in Western Africa underlined the global nature of car theft. Among the vehicles recovered were a Maserati and two Range Rovers from Italy, one of which had been reported stolen in 2010, as well as a Mini from France and a BMW from Canada.

As part of its Formatrain network, INTERPOL brings together public and private sector specialists to train officers around the world in vehicle theft investigation techniques with more than 20 regional training courses conducted in 2015.

Methods

Some methods used by criminals to steal motor vehicles include:

- Theft of an unattended vehicle without key(s): The removal of a parked vehicle either by breaking and entry, followed by

hotwiring or other tampering methods to start the vehicle, or else towing. In London the police say that 50% of the annual 20,000 car thefts are now from high tech OBD (Onboard Diagnostic Port) key cloning kits and bypass immobiliser simulators.

- Theft with access to keys: Known in some places as "Taken Without Owner's Consent (TWOC)". The unauthorized use of a vehicle in which the owner has allowed the driver to have possession of or easy access to the keys. Often, this is the adolescent or grown child or employee of the vehicle's owner who, at other times, may be authorized to use the vehicle. This may be treated differently, depending on the jurisdiction's laws, and the owner may choose not to press charges. However, owner has left a spare set of keys in the glovebox, and use these to drive the car away.

- Opportunistic theft: The removal of a vehicle that the owner or operator has left unattended with the keys visibly present, sometimes idling. Alternatively, some cars offered for sale are stolen during a 'test drive'. A 'test drive' may also provide a potential thief with insight into where the vehicle keys are stored, so that the thief may return later to steal the vehicle.

- Carjacking: Refers to the taking of a vehicle by force or threat of force from its owner or operator. In most places, this is the most serious form of theft, since assault also occurs. In some carjackings, the operators and passengers are forced from the vehicle while the thief drives it away him/herself, while in other incidents, the operator and/or passenger(s) are forced to remain in the vehicle as hostages. Some less common carjackings result in the operator being forced to drive the assailant in accordance with the assailant's demands.

- Fraudulent theft: Illegal acquisition of a vehicle from a seller through fraudulent transfer of funds that the seller will ultimately not receive (such as by identity theft or the use of a counterfeit cashier's check), or through the use of a loan obtained under false pretenses. Many vehicles stolen via fraud are resold quickly thereafter. Using this approach, the thief can quietly evade detection and continue stealing vehicles in different jurisdictions. Car rental and Car dealership companies are also defrauded by car thieves into renting, selling, financing, or leasing them cars with fake identification,

checks, and credit cards. This is a common practice in areas near borders which tracking devices do nothing because jurisdiction cannot be applied into a foreign country to recover a lost vehicle.

Advice car owners how to keep your car from being stolen:

Here are some ways GEICO recommends to help drivers protect their vehicles:

Keep your vehicle locked at all times, even while driving.

When parked, never leave your keys in the car. Close all the windows and the sunroof.

Never leave your car running and unattended.

Avoid leaving valuables inside your vehicle where passersby can see them.

Do not leave your vehicle title in the car. Too often a car thief is pulled over and gets away from the police because he or she can produce the auto registration. (If multiple drivers use the vehicle, the best suggestion would be to hide the registration in a secret location in the car that only the owners know.)

Know where you're going. Avoid known high crime areas even if the alternate route takes longer.

Install an anti-theft system in your vehicle if it doesn't have one. Thieves are reluctant to steal vehicles if they know the cars can be recovered quickly. Many insurers offer discounts for the types of systems listed below.

Thieves prefer to work in the dark. Be particularly cautious at night about where you park your car. Park it in a well-lit area if possible.

Look around. Be aware of your surroundings, especially in garages, parking lots and gas stations.

Have your car's vehicle identification number (VIN) etched on each of the windows. Car thieves want to get off cheap. They don't want to go to the expense of replacing all the glass.

On an incline, leave your car in park or in gear with the wheels turned to be replaced; you can't

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