



April 2, 2020

Joe Moylan, PIO  
Weld County Sheriff's Office  
(970) 400-2809, Desk  
(970) 400-2802, PIO line

### **Weld Criminal Impact Unit arrests chop shop head, recovers \$300K in stolen vehicles**

The Weld County Sheriff's Office's Criminal Impact Unit scored a major victory this week when it arrested the head of a local chop shop responsible for stealing and modifying hundreds of thousands of dollars in stolen vehicles.

Kevin Abelbert Chavez, 29, of Denver was arrested Wednesday and booked into the Weld County Jail on suspicion of 22 felonies including 11 counts of aggravated motor vehicle theft, seven counts of chop shop activity, four counts of theft and one count of vehicular eluding. Chavez is being held without bond pending his first appearance in court.

The investigation began Jan. 30 when Chavez's ex-wife contacted the Criminal Impact Unit about possible illegal activity. The Criminal Impact Unit, also known as the Strike Team, is a group of detectives housed under the Investigations Unit at the sheriff's office.

The ex-wife told investigators she and Chavez recently went to divorce court, but because Chavez has no verifiable income – due to earning a living entirely from criminal activity – she wasn't awarded alimony to help care for their children. Knowing Chavez earned six figures a year from his illegal chop shop enterprise, the ex-wife decided to call the sheriff's office to inform detectives about a number of stolen pickups, all-terrain vehicles, trailers and utility task vehicles.

Members of the Criminal Impact Unit acted on the tip that same day and recovered more than \$200,000 in stolen vehicles. The vehicles were reported stolen in Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming and New Mexico.

The Unit continued to investigate leads and on Feb. 10 encountered Chavez driving a stolen vehicle on U.S. 85 and Weld County Road 8, about three miles south of Fort Lupton. Chavez fled from investigators who opted not to engage in a high-speed pursuit due to public safety concerns.

- MORE -



Last week, members of the Criminal Impact Unit recovered several more vehicles, including two pickups and three ATVs valued at more than \$100,000 to bring the total amount of recovered property to over \$300,000. Weapons also were recovered with the vehicles.

On Wednesday, 63 days after the investigation began, detectives contacted Chavez. Although he admitted some responsibility, he refused to provide any new information or leads. He was subsequently arrested and booked on suspicion of the 22 felony charges.

The Criminal Impact Unit investigation remains ongoing as detectives have identified other members of the chop shop and stolen vehicle ring. Chavez's ex-wife and the known victims to date are not being identified due to that ongoing investigation.

Anyone with additional information about Chavez and his criminal activity is asked to call the Weld County Sheriff's Office Criminal Impact Unit at (970) 304-6464.

Also participating in the investigation were the Larimer County Sheriff's Office, Fort Collins Police Services, Yuma County Sheriff's Office, the Beat Auto Theft Through Law Enforcement (BATTLE) task force and the FBI out of Wyoming.

Anyone with information regarding this or any other crime is asked to call the Weld County Sheriff's Office at (970) 356-4015 or Northern Colorado Crime Stoppers at **1-800-222-TIPS (8477)**. **Tips can also be submitted through the Crime Stoppers website at [www.crimeshurt.com](http://www.crimeshurt.com). Those submitting tips through Crime Stoppers that lead to the arrest and filing of charges on a suspect(s) may be eligible for a cash reward.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Steve Reams'.

Steve Reams – Sheriff