

LOMPOC RECORD

Trio accused of stealing identities to purchase cars from dealerships across Central Coast

Dave Minsky Feb 3, 2021



A man and woman from Santa Maria and a Tustin man are accused of allegedly stealing the personal information of several individuals, creating fake IDs, then purchasing cars from dealerships across the Central Coast, according to a criminal complaint filed in January.

Kimberly Machleit, 36, and Donald Anderson, 37, both of Santa Maria, and Kevin Rasmussen, 28, of Tustin, face 26 counts that include ID theft, grand theft auto, receiving stolen property and false impersonation.

The three are accused of stealing the information of at least five individuals to make fake IDs and obtain loans used to purchase vehicles from car dealerships, including one in Santa Maria, from May to August 2020.

Anderson, who was charged with 14 counts, pleaded not guilty on Feb. 1. Machleit and Rasmussen, who was issued an arrest warrant on Jan. 21, have yet to enter pleas in the case, according to records.

Additionally, Machleit and Anderson are facing charges of murder and murder accessory, respectively, to which they pleaded not guilty, in a case filed in September.

The murder case is not related to the theft case, according to Deputy District Attorney Madison Whitmore.

The thefts allegedly occurred before the pair was charged in the death of 53-year-old **Joseph Martin Govey**, who was reported missing from Orange County in August 2016 and was killed in December 2018, according to Santa Barbara County sheriff's deputies who identified **Govey's dismembered remains** in a pond located at Blacklake Golf Resort in Nipomo.

A third suspect, 33-year-old Ben Mersai, of Grover Beach, also was arrested and charged with murder in the case.

The investigation into the car thefts began Aug. 20, when sheriff's detectives started looking into Rasmussen and "multiple associates" for large-scale fraud, according to a Jan. 19 declaration filed by Deputy Justin DiPinto of the Special Investigations Bureau.

Through the investigation, DiPinto learned that Rasmussen allegedly used victims' credit lines and took advantage of the mask mandate to conceal his identity when he purchased high-end cars from dealerships.

One vehicle purchase was on May 21, 2020, when Rasmussen took out a \$48,500 loan using the credit of a New Jersey man and bought a 2019 Dodge Challenger from the Santa Maria Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram dealership on South Broadway, according to DiPinto.

As a general protocol, Rasmussen posed for a picture with the new vehicle that was posted to the dealership's social media page. The picture has since been removed.

"[Rasmussen] successfully walked into at least five local car dealers and drove away in new or slightly used vehicles," according to DiPinto. "[Rasmussen] would dispose of the vehicles, but to what degree or to whom was never determined."

Anderson is scheduled to appear for a preliminary hearing setting at 1:30 p.m. Feb. 22, and Machleit is scheduled to appear for an arraignment at 8:30 a.m. Feb. 25 in Superior Court in Santa Maria.