

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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Handguns Stolen from unlocked Vehicle during a Burglary – Persistent work by deputies results in arrests

COMMUNITY AWARENESS ALERT - This case involved the burglary of an unlocked vehicle that contained 2 handguns. Over the years, YCSO has taken numerous reports in which firearms were stolen from both unlocked and locked vehicles by suspects trolling neighborhoods for valuables and firearms.



*FOR THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY, YCSO REMINDS FIREARM OWNERS TO **ALWAYS** STORE WEAPONS IN A SECURE ENVIRONMENT ANYTIME YOUR VEHICLE IS UNOCCUPIED AND PARKED FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME.*

The practice of storing firearms in vehicles parked overnight, even in your own driveway, is not responsible gun ownership. Many times, locally stolen firearms are used in crimes around the state.

Additionally – As reported over the last few weeks by various law enforcement agencies, there has been an ongoing rash of vehicle burglaries in communities around Yavapai County. During follow-up with this case, deputies learned that a select few students in area schools are bragging about such activity which they call 'car hopping' – the act of going through neighborhoods after dark and trying vehicle door handles to determine if they are unlocked. The simple way to avoid becoming a victim is to avoid storing valuables in your unoccupied vehicle and **ALWAYS LOCK YOUR CAR.** Vehicle alarms and parking in well-lit areas can also be a strong deterrent.

Background – (The original incident report was filed January 19, 2016, and public notice was delayed due to an ongoing investigation which remained active as of yesterday).

Between the evening of January 18, 2016, and the morning of the 19th, a resident on Sapphire Drive in the Diamond Valley subdivision of Prescott reported the theft of 2 semi-auto handguns, a .45 and .32 caliber, from his unlocked truck. During late morning hours on the January 19th, deputies received a

report from a neighbor of the burglary victim explaining they heard a gunshot around 6PM the prior evening (January 18) and then saw 2 teenaged males running from the area. The neighbor was familiar with both teens as they live in the neighborhood and provided descriptions. The neighbor also reported finding a live .45 caliber round the following day while walking along a dirt path in the vicinity of the gunshot sound. Deputies had since recovered this round which matched the type of ammo in the stolen .45 handgun.

While searching the area for a spent shell casing based on reports of a shot being fired, deputies located shoe prints that matched the size and tread pattern found on the victim's property. Deputies also found a now empty holster belonging to the victim in some thick brush adjacent to a nearby footpath.

Based on information from the neighbor who reported a gunshot the prior evening, deputies went to the home of a potential suspect on E. Joan Street, Prescott. The suspect was not home at the time, but during follow-up in the presence of his parents, deputies found shoes' belonging to their son with sole's that matched prints found at the burglary scene. The 15-year-old juvenile eventually returned home. Based on physical evidence and statements from some of the suspect's peers, he was arrested. He denied involvement.

The second suspect, also 15-years-of-age and residing in a neighborhood on Ramada Drive, was also arrested for involvement in the burglary. This suspect admitted knowledge of both stolen firearms and where they might be hidden.

On January 20, 2016, deputies deployed a volunteer search team who eventually located the stolen .32 caliber handgun adjacent to a creek. The investigation remains active as to the other stolen weapon and additional suspects. If anyone has additional information regarding this case, please refer to report number 16-002385.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website:
www.ycsoaz.gov