

Armenian crime rings charged with attempted murder, \$83M Amazon cargo theft

Alleged crime syndicate posed as Amazon carrier to steal shipments, US authorities say

[Noi Mahoney](#)

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Authorities arrested 13 alleged members of rival Armenian crime organizations, charging them with kidnapping, attempted murder and cargo theft. (Photo: Jim Allen/FreightWaves)

Federal authorities on Tuesday arrested 13 alleged members of rival Armenian crime organizations locked in an apparent power struggle in Los Angeles County.

The charges include attempted murder, kidnapping, illegal firearm possession, bank and wire fraud, and cargo theft totaling more than \$80 million, the U.S. Department of Justice said in a [news release](#).

Among the defendants are Ara Artuni, 41, of Los Angeles, who is charged with attempted murder in aid of racketeering, and Robert Amiryan, 46, of Hollywood, who is charged with kidnapping.

Authorities say both men were leaders of rival Armenian organized crime syndicates, referred to as “avtoritet,” which is Russian for “authority,” and that they have been engaged in a violent feud to maintain control of the San Fernando Valley since 2022.

Artuni is charged with ordering the attempted murder of Amiryan during the summer of 2023. In retaliation, Amiryan allegedly conspired with members of his own criminal organization to kidnap and torture one of Artuni’s associates in June 2023.

In addition to attempted murder, authorities say Artuni and his criminal enterprise committed bank fraud, wire fraud and cargo theft.

Artuni and his organization allegedly targeted e-commerce giant Amazon by enrolling as carriers for the online retailer. Artuni and his men would contract trucking routes with Amazon, and while transporting the goods, diverge from the route and steal all or part of the shipments.

The Artuni enterprise allegedly stole more than \$83 million from Amazon, according to estimates provided by the company.

“This transnational criminal organization operated with the structure and brutality of an international cartel, inflicting significant harm on public safety and causing substantial damage to legitimate commerce and supply chains,” Dwayne Angebrandts, Homeland Security Investigation’s Los Angeles acting deputy special agent in charge, said in a statement.

Artuni’s organization also reportedly ran a “credit card bust-out” scheme in which it charged credit cards to a fake business and then “drained the business account” before credit card companies could collect the disputed funds.

Several other arrests were made in the Los Angeles area and two more in Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood, Florida. Authorities continue to look for one defendant.

Federal agents seized more than \$100,000 in cash, 14 firearms and three armored vehicles in the May 20 operation, which included assistance from the Los Angeles and Burbank police departments.

If convicted of all charges, the defendants could face maximum sentences ranging from 10 years to life in prison.