

## Stop-check of car in Romania results in conviction of man for burglary series



The car stopped by Romanian officers in February was full of stolen items.

A police stop-check of a car in Romania has resulted in a 23-year-old man being convicted of a series of burglaries committed in Somerset and South Gloucestershire.



Claudiu Popa (left), of no fixed address, was jailed for three years and 10 months at Taunton Crown Court on Friday, after admitting conspiracy to commit burglaries. The conspiracy charge related to offences committed in Tickenham, Nailsea, Dyrham, Chilton Polden, Wedmore and Glastonbury between 20 and 28 January this year.

In one of the offences, medals and jewellery were stolen from an 86-year-old man in Nailsea during a burglary on Monday 20 January.

Popa was stopped by police officers in Romania for a traffic offence on Monday 3 February. Officers found a haul of stolen goods in the back of his car (following photo) including silverware, medals and jewellery.

Popa fled the country after being released for further enquiries to take place but an intelligence report was sent from the Romanian authorities to our officers, via the Metropolitan Police, linking the items found to burglaries in Somerset.



PC Mark Pollock, from the Operation Remedy team, said: "Popa was one of a professional gang of burglars who carried out a series of offences in our force area. They would smash windows at the homes they were targeting and steal silverware, jewellery, and in some cases war medals.

"The crime group would courier the stolen property out of the country and into mainland Europe. We recovered DNA evidence at some of our burglary scenes and this evidence directly led to the arrest of Claudiu Popa in Scotland, where he was working at a hotel after fleeing Romania.

"In interview, Popa admitted his involvement in multiple burglary offences and said items found in his car had been stolen from homes within our force area. We're now in the process of working with officers in Romania to obtain photographs of all the recovered items and reunite as many as we can with their rightful owners, but this is going to be a complex and painstaking process.

"There are other suspects linked to this crime series – two are believed to be in Switzerland where they've been arrested for other offences, while a third is believed to be at large in Romania.



"We'd like to thank the National Crime Agency, Interpol, Police Scotland and the Metropolitan Police for their help in this investigation so far. Criminals don't respect borders and in this case it's needed a Europe-wide effort to bring this offender to justice."

Silverware found in the car stopped by Romanian officers