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THE CASE FILE YOU PUBLISHED

The organized burglary prosecutions of the past year repeat one operational detail: target selection ran on public information, and entries were timed to guaranteed absences. The surveillance most families fear happened long before anyone parked outside.

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WHAT THE PROSECUTIONS DESCRIBE

Federal and state cases against the crews that hit professional athletes' homes describe a consistent method. Targets were identified through publicly available schedules and location information. Homes were entered while occupants were verifiably away, in the athletes' case during games, in civilian cases during posted vacations. The FBI's related guidance this summer warns that international theft groups surveil homeowners to learn routines and advises travelers not to announce trips on social media while they are underway. The athletes made headlines; the method works on any household whose absence can be predicted from public information, and law enforcement has documented the same approach against ordinary affluent homeowners.

THE FILE ASSEMBLES ITSELF

Consider what a stranger can compile about a household in one evening, without leaving a couch. Real estate listings, current and archived, provide interior layouts, entry points, and the location of valuables shown in staging photos. People-search and data broker sites provide the address, household members, ages, and vehicles. Social accounts provide the texture: the watch collection photographed on a nightstand, the second home, the school, the gym schedule, and the vacation announced on day one with eleven days remaining. County records provide the rest. None of this is exotic tradecraft. It is reading.

WHY ABSENCE IS THE TRIGGER

Property crews prefer certainty of absence over everything else, because absence removes the two variables that end careers: confrontation and witnesses. Public information has made absence predictable. A posted itinerary, a tagged airport photo, a public race entry, or a conference speaker page each convert a maybe into a window. The defensive implication is direct: the single highest-value habit is denying certainty, which costs nothing and inconveniences no one except the person planning around your calendar.

THINNING THE FILE

Run the collection against yourself, honestly, then repair in order of value. Post travel after return, never during, and make it a family and staff rule, because the youngest account in the household sets the exposure. Strip location metadata by default and audit follower lists on family accounts annually. After a property sale closes, request removal of interior photography from listing archives. Route deliveries and registrations through non-home addresses where practical. And fold the online footprint, listings, permits, tagged photos, and broker records, into the residential security assessment as a standing section, reviewed on the same cycle as the physical survey.

THE AWARENESS LAYER

Footprint work degrades selection. Awareness training degrades the remainder. Households that know what pre-operational activity looks like, the repeated vehicle, the mistimed delivery, the pretext caller mapping who is home, report it earlier and disrupt it more often. The combination, a thin file and a household that notices, is what makes a residence expensive to plan against, and expensive is what crews move past.

SOURCES AND METHOD

This briefing draws on July 2026 reporting of federal guidance and prosecution filings. We describe attacker method at pattern level only and center no individual victims. The detail we omit is deliberate.

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