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**THREE CHARGED IN ATM "SKIMMER" SCHEME**

*Allegedly Tampered With Woodside ATMs To Steal Customers' Personal Information*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that three individuals with ties to Eastern Europe have been charged with putting "skimmer" devices on a Woodside bank's ATMs last week in order to steal the account numbers and other personal information from customers' credit/debit cards used at the machines.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendants are accused of illegally placing card readers known as 'skimmers' on the bank's automated teller machines to steal credit/debit card information from unwitting customers. Once a card's data is captured, the information can then be encoded onto bogus credit cards or be used in any criminal endeavor involving identity theft."

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Mirel A. Leahu, 23, of Dearborn Heights, Michigan, and Marian A. Tudor and Danel Opre, of Romania. The three defendants were arraigned on Saturday, February 27, 2010, before Queens Criminal Court Judge Ira Margulis on charges of third-degree burglary, second-degree criminal mischief, criminal possession of forgery devices, possession of burglar's tools, third-degree unlawful possession of personal identification information and second-degree unlawful possession of a skimmer device. The defendants, who each face up to seven years in prison if convicted, were each ordered held on \$250,000 bail and a return to court on March 9, 2010.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges, Tudor and Opre were observed on video surveillance cameras entering the HSBC Bank, located at 51-20 Northern Boulevard, just after midnight on February 22, 2010, with scarves covering their faces and bending down and tampering and altering two ATM machines. The two defendants were allegedly observed again tampering with the machines later that same day and the following day. It is further alleged that at approximately 1:15 a.m. on February 27<sup>th</sup>, Leahu was observed walking toward the HSBC bank with Tudor and Opre and standing outside – with a clear view of the inside of the bank – as the other two men entered and remained inside the bank. When Leahu allegedly saw an NYPD officer drive toward the bank, he was seen making a phone call on his cell phone.

It is additionally alleged that holes had been drilled into the two ATM machines and that wires protruding from the holes on one of the machines were connected to a skimmer device attached to the bottom of the debit/credit card insert slot on the machine. A second skimmer device was allegedly recovered from Opre's left jacket pocket and a solder device was allegedly found on the ground next to Tudor.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Robert Cimino, of the New York City Police Department's Identity Theft Squad, under the supervision of Sergeant Barry Neiss and Lieutenant Ruperto Aguilar and the command of Deputy Inspector Gregory T. Antonsen, of the Financial Crimes Task Force, and the overall supervision of Deputy Chief Jeremiah Quinlan, Commander of the Special Investigations Division, and Chief Phil T. Pulaski, of the Detectives Bureau.

Assistant District Attorney Edward K. Suh, of the Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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