

Romanian national pleads guilty to role in ATM skimming scheme throughout Massachusetts

Defendant was extradited from Germany.

BOSTON – A Romanian national pleaded guilty today in federal court in Boston to racketeering conspiracy charges relating to an ATM skimming operation that stretched throughout Massachusetts and other states including Connecticut, New York and South Carolina.

Dragos Nelu Hornea, 26, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity (more commonly known as RICO conspiracy) and one count of conspiracy to use counterfeit access devices. U.S. Senior District Court Judge William G. Young scheduled sentencing for Feb. 3, 2022. Dragos Hornea was extradited from Germany to the District of Massachusetts in April 2021 after being indicted in May 2017.

Dragos Hornea was a member of the Hornea Crew, led by co-conspirators Constantin Denis Hornea and Ludemis Hornea. Over a period of 18 months, the Crew engaged in an ATM skimming scheme to steal debit card numbers and PINs from unsuspecting bank customers in Massachusetts, Connecticut, South Carolina, Georgia and other locations within the United States. Members of the Crew installed skimming devices in the following locations: Amherst, Bellingham, Billerica, Braintree, Chicopee, Quincy, Southwick, Waltham, Weymouth and Whately, Mass.; Enfield, Conn.; Columbia, Greenville, Greenwood, Mauldin, and Saluda, S.C.; Savannah, Ga.; and Yadkinville, N.C. The stolen information was then used by Hornea and other

co-conspirators to clone the victim customers' debit cards and make unauthorized withdrawals from victim bank accounts at ATMs throughout the United States. In total, the skimming activities resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses.

Dragos Hornea was indicted with 13 co-defendants in May 2017, along with another co-defendant charged in a superseding indictment. All 15 defendants have pleaded guilty and those sentenced have received sentences ranging from one year and one day to 65 months in prison.

The charge of conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and fine of \$250,000. The charge of conspiracy to use counterfeit access devices provides for a sentence of up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release and fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based on the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting United States Attorney Nathaniel R. Mendell; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; Douglas Bartlett, Acting U.S. Marshal for the District of Massachusetts; and Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police made the announcement today. Assistance with the investigation was also provided by the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigations in Boston; U.S. Secret Service; U.S. Postal Service; Massachusetts Department of Correction; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the Amherst, Billerica, Braintree, Boston, Quincy, Southwick, Waltham, Whately, and Westwood Police Departments in Massachusetts; Greenwich (Conn.), New York City, Houston, Florence and Saluda (S.C.) Police Departments; Connecticut State Police; South Carolina Law Enforcement Division; Richland County (South Carolina) Sheriff's Department; and the Solicitor's Offices of

Greenville and Saluda Counties. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs provided invaluable assistance in securing the arrest and extradition of Dragos Hornea to the United States. Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy E. Moran, Chief of Mendell's Organized Crime and Gang Unit, is prosecuting the case.