

# Romanian National Sentenced for ATM Skimming and Money Laundering

A Romanian national was sentenced on Monday, March 12, and another pleaded guilty, in federal court in Boston in connection with an ATM skimming scheme operating throughout Massachusetts and other states including Connecticut, New York, and South Carolina.

Ion Trifu, 25, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge William G. Young to one year and one day in prison and one year of supervised release. In December 2017, Trifu pleaded guilty to conspiracy to use counterfeit access devices and money laundering conspiracy. Nicusor Bonculescu, 24, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, conspiracy to use counterfeit access devices, and aggravated identity theft. Judge Young scheduled sentencing for June 7, 2018.

In May 2017, Trifu and Bonculescu were indicted in connection with the ATM skimming scheme along with 12 others. Bonculescu is the eighth defendant to plead guilty.

The defendants, except for Trifu, were members of the Hornea Crew, led by Constantin Denis Hornea and Ludemis Hornea, and engaged in ATM skimming – a scheme in which the defendants obtained debit card numbers and PINs from unsuspecting bank customers, created counterfeit cards, and made unauthorized withdrawals from the victims' bank accounts.

Over a period of 18 months, the Crew installed skimming devices and made unauthorized withdrawals in seven states, including Massachusetts. In particular, 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 Crew made unauthorized withdrawals at ATMs in approximately 29 Massachusetts towns; seven Connecticut towns; six New York towns; Salem, N.H.; and Sumter, S.C.

Members of the Hornea Crew and Trifu transferred money throughout the United States and to Romania and the People's Republic of China. Some of those transfers were for the purchase of skimming devices and related components from abroad.

The charge of conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering conspiracy provides for a sentence of no greater than 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 no greater than five years in prison, three years of supervised release, and fine of \$250,000. The charge of aggravated identity theft provides for a mandatory consecutive term of two years in prison. The defendants will face deportation proceedings upon completion of their sentences. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division; and Colonel Kerry A. Gilpin, 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 (IRS-CI) 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; Connecticut State Police;

Greenwich Police Department; the New York City Police Department; Houston Police Department; South Carolina Law Enforcement Division; Richland County (South Carolina) Sheriff's Department; Florence and Saluda (South Carolina) Police Departments; and the Solicitor's Offices of Greenville and Saluda Counties. Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy E. Moran of Lelling's Organized Crime and Gang Unit is prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging document are allegations. The remaining defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.