



***United States Attorney
District of New Jersey***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 29, 2015
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**ROMANIAN NATIONAL ADMITS ROLE AS RINGLEADER OF
\$5 MILLION ATM SKIMMING SCHEME**

NEWARK, N.J. – A native of Romania who was arrested in Sweden and extradited to the United States admitted today to directing a large-scale scheme that stole bank account information through a process commonly referred to as “ATM skimming,” in which conspirators secretly installed card-reading devices on ATMs throughout New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Florida, and elsewhere, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Marius Vintila, a/k/a “Dan Girneata,” 31, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge William J. Martini in Newark federal court to Count One of a superseding indictment, conspiracy to commit bank fraud, and Count Two, aggravated identity theft.

In July 2013, as federal agents in New Jersey arrested various members of his large-scale ATM skimming scheme, Vintila fled the United States. On Sept. 24, 2013, he was apprehended in Sweden and subsequently extradited to the United States. Vintila has been held without bail since his arrival in the United States in February 2014.

According to documents filed in this and other cases and statements made in court:

Vintila was the ringleader of an extensive ATM skimming scheme that targeted thousands of bank customers and defrauded Citibank, TD Bank, Wells Fargo, and multiple other financial institutions out of at least \$5 million.

Vintila and his conspirators constructed sophisticated card-reader devices capable of reading and storing customers’ bank account information as the customers performed routine bank transactions at ATMs. Vintila and his conspirators also concealed pinhole cameras in panels designed to match existing ATM components. Vintila then taught and directed several conspirators to install the devices on ATMs. Once installed, the card-reader devices secretly read identity and account information contained on the magnetic strip of customer ATM cards. The pinhole cameras recorded customer keystrokes as they entered their personal identification numbers.

After the account information was stolen, Vintila and his conspirators used the stolen data to create thousands of fraudulent ATM cards, which they used to withdraw millions of dollars from customers’ bank accounts. Vintila also used an alias, “Dan Girneata,” to open bank accounts, rent vehicles and rent multiple self-storage units where he stored skimming devices, pinhole cameras, super glue, tape, SD cards, batteries, computers, molds, fraudulent ATM cards, and cash

proceeds. Vintila also provided other conspirators with fake passports and aliases to use in furtherance of the scheme.

Vintila's ATM skimming operation is one of the largest ever uncovered by law enforcement. To date, 16 individuals, including Vintila, have been charged. Eleven of those 16 have pleaded guilty. Bogdan Radu, 30, who was charged separately, helped design and construct the ATM skimming devices used during a large portion of the scheme. Radu pleaded guilty to bank fraud conspiracy and aggravated identity theft in February 2014. Enes Causevic, 24, Marius Cotiga, 35, Constantin Ginga, 53, Dezso Gyapias, 29, Ioan Leusca, 30, Constantin Pendus, 30, and Emil Revesz, 30, all charged separately from Vintila, participated in Vintila's ATM skimming scheme by installing or removing the devices, and by subsequently using the fraudulent ATM cards to withdraw cash from compromised bank accounts. Florin Apetrei, 18, Luis Franco, 23, and Mirel Hadzalic, 24, participated in the scheme by using the fraudulent ATM cards to withdraw cash. Causevic, Cotiga, Ginga, Gyapias, Leusca and Revesz all pleaded guilty to bank fraud conspiracy and aggravated identity theft charges. Apetrei, Cotiga, Pendus, Franco and Hadzalic pleaded guilty to bank fraud conspiracy. For their roles in the scheme, Judge Martini sentenced Ginga, Gyapias and Leusca each to 57 months' imprisonment. Franco and Pendus each received sentences of 33 months in prison. Hadzalic and Apetrei each received 34 and 24 months in prison, respectively. Causevic, Cotiga, Radu and Revesz are still await sentencing.

Dinu Horvat, 28, who was charged as a co-defendant along with Vintila, has pleaded not guilty, and is scheduled to stand trial in March 2015. Charges remain pending against Alin Dumitru Carabus, 40, Ionut Vasile Ciurba-Stana, a/k/a "Ciorba," 28, and Robert Eduard Mate, a/k/a "Chioru," 29, three additional members of the conspiracy who were charged by indictment on April 16, 2014. Carabus, Ciurba-Stana, and Mate were all apprehended in Spain, and requests for extradition to the United States are pending.

The bank fraud conspiracy charge to which Vintila pleaded guilty carries a maximum potential penalty of 30 years in prison and a \$1 million fine. The aggravated identity theft charge carries a mandatory, consecutive penalty of two years in prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine. Vintila is scheduled for sentencing on May 5, 2015.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the U.S. Secret Service, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Carl Agnelli, along with special agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Newark Division, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge John P. Woods, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea.

The charges against Horvat, Carabus, Ciurba-Stana and Mate are merely accusations, and the defendants are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rahul Agarwal of the Special Prosecutions Division and David M. Eskew of the Criminal Division, Economic Crimes Unit, in Newark.