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## More ATM skimming suspects appear in court

July 19, 2013 | By Melhor Leonor, Sun Sentinel, By Melhor Leonor, Sun Sentinel

Neamtu Vaduva walked out of an Oakland Park bank as he had done oftentimes before, a small skimming device tucked under his jacket. This time, though, law enforcement officials were waiting and watching.

Friday, months after his arrest, Vaduva, 23, of Fort Lauderdale, appeared in court to plead guilty to conspiring with at least nine other South Florida men to defraud banks by using skimming devices.

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Vaduva pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge William Dimitrouleas to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud, though charged with 31 counts of conspiracy, identity theft and fraud.

Under the plea agreement, the court will dismiss the other counts after sentencing.

Between September of last year and March of this year, the group admitted to installing skimming devices and pinhole cameras at banks in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties, court documents show. The devices are made to look like part of the ATM, fooling unsuspecting users.

Vaduva and others would install the devices and cameras, then retrieve them hours later. Records show this was done on at least 40 occasions, obtaining information on at least 796 accounts.

With that information, they fabricated counterfeit ATM cards and attempted to withdraw money from at least 217 accounts for a total of at least \$187,790, records show. According to authorities, most of the funds were withdrawn at ATMs in [Broward County](#).

Vaduva was arrested Feb. 17 after removing a device from an ATM. Vaduva claims he did not install the device, only retrieved it. His sentencing is scheduled for Sept. 27. He faces a maximum of 30 years in prison and a maximum fine of up to \$1 million.

Vaduva, who was born in Germany and entered the U.S. illegally through Mexico last year, will likely be deported after completing his sentence.

Eugen Bacelan, another of the conspirators, also appeared for sentencing after pleading guilty weeks before. He is charged with similar crimes; his sentencing will resume Monday.

Bacelan was arrested Feb. 27 in a Fort Lauderdale home. Law enforcement officials found \$17,600 in cash in his closet, which he said belonged to his uncle, records show.

Dimitrouleas pointed out that the cash was in \$20 bills, typically the largest bills dispensed by ATMs.

The other conspirators were identified as Antonio Dumitru, Soniard Nistor, Nicu Calin, Aris Chiciu,

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Eugen Bacelan, Maurizo Margel, Ion Nistor and Victor Slatineanu. All have Romanian ties. Chiciu and Margel were sentenced last month.

[mleonor@tribune.com](mailto:mleonor@tribune.com), 954-356-4527 or Twitter @melhorl

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