

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
Laura E. Duffy***

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For Immediate Release

Man Sentenced for Elaborate Identity Theft Scheme

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – June 28, 2013

A man who stole hundreds of identities – many by skimming debit card numbers from gasoline pumps around San Diego - was sentenced today to more than three years in prison and ordered to pay \$521,800 in restitution to victims.

Akop Taymizyan, 37, pleaded guilty in January, 2013, to conspiracy to commit access device fraud and bank fraud and aggravated identity theft. A co-conspirator, Georgi Rushanyan, pleaded guilty to the same charges and was sentenced to 48 months in custody on April 27, 2012.

During today’s hearing, U.S. District Judge Dana M. Sabraw called the thefts a “highly sophisticated conspiracy” and “a drain on society’s resources.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney Sabrina Feve, in urging the court to impose a lengthy sentence, noted that Taymizyan continued to steal even after his co-conspirator was taken into custody. “Even Rushanyan’s arrest

and prosecution did not deter the conspiracy from continuing to steal and make unauthorized use of victims' debit card numbers and PINs," Feve wrote in court documents.

The charges against Taymizyan arose from his involvement in a scheme to steal and use victims' debit card numbers and personal identification numbers (PINs). Beginning in or about December 2009, the conspiracy installed skimming devices inside gas pumps located in California, Arizona, and Nevada. These devices surreptitiously recorded victims' debit card numbers and PINs.

The conspiracy then re-encoded the stolen debit card numbers onto dummy magnetized access cards and affixed the matching PIN via a sticker. Taymizyan, along with other co-conspirators, then traveled around California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas, and Georgia making unauthorized withdrawals from victims' bank accounts. The withdrawals were for both cash and US Postal stamps.

The conspiracy stole debit card numbers and PINs for over 400 bank accounts belonging to at least six banks, and over 8,800 "Forever" stamps. To date, the conspiracy has made over \$500,000 in unauthorized withdrawals.

Gas pumps in and around San Diego were targeted as part of this scheme and at least 30 bank accounts belonging to San Diego-area victims were compromised. Members of the conspiracy, including Taymizyan, also traveled to San Diego to make unauthorized withdrawals. In February 2010, Taymizyan made an unauthorized withdrawal from a La Jolla ATM.

"Identity theft is a pervasive and growing threat to consumers and financial institutions," said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. "The U.S. Attorney's Office recommends that individuals monitor their monthly bank, credit card, and brokerage account statements for unauthorized charges and immediately report any unauthorized charges or transfers to their financial institutions."

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 12cr4134-DMS

Akop Taymizyan

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Commit Access Device Fraud and Bank Fraud - Title 18, United States Code, 371

Maximum penalties: 5 years' imprisonment and \$250,000 fine

Aggravated Identity Theft - Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1028A

Mandatory sentence: 2 years' imprisonment

AGENCIES

United States Secret Service, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department; Cobb County, Georgia District Attorney's Office

