

Arrests made in skimming operation spanning Halton/GTA

By David Lea
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Halton police made 12 arrests last Tuesday, concluding an investigation into an alleged ATM skimming operation, which saw \$300,000 stolen from customers and banks in Halton and across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

During a Friday morning news conference at the Oak Walk Drive police station, police displayed some \$40,000 seized during the operation and dozens of pieces of equipment, which they said was used to covertly record people's banking information.

Police said a financial institution investigator alerted them to the skimming in October 2011, but allege those behind the fraud had been operating since April 2010.

On Jan. 31, Halton police, along with police services from Durham, Toronto, and York, Ontario Provincial Police, and the Provincial Asset Forfeiture Unit — all of which assisted in the investigation — issued eight search warrants on residences in Markham, Vaughan and Toronto.

In addition to seizing the \$40,000 in Canadian currency, police said they dismantled an alleged credit-card printing lab, seizing instruments used to forge credit cards, numerous fraudulent credit cards, and three vehicles.

"This particular fraud involved the suspects installing illegal skimming devices and hidden video cameras on bank machines and gas station credit card readers, conducting counter surveillance to ensure the devices were not discovered by the public or the police and subsequently removing these

devices," said Halton Chief Gary Crowell. "Once the devices were removed by the suspects, the stolen data was then downloaded and compared to hidden camera surveillance that they had obtained, thereby revealing the PINs of the victims' bank or credit cards. The downloaded data and the PINs were then encoded onto a variety of fraudulent cards."

Crowell said the suspects would then either withdraw money directly from the victims' accounts or make direct purchases with the fraudulent cards. He also said many of the suspects were caught on surveillance tapes when they installed their devices.

In total, police said, the suspects compromised 280 bank machines and around 10 gas station credit card readers across the GTA.

Det.-Const. Dwayne Perron said 35 incidents of this fraud took place in Halton, where only ATMs were targeted. He would not specify what specific locations had been compromised.

During the news conference, the Canadian Bankers Association praised all those involved for their work.

"Payment card fraud is a serious issue facing everyone. While our industry prevents billions of dollars of fraud on an annual basis from occurring, losses... in 2010 alone, with regard to payment card fraud, were at half a billion dollars," said William Crate, security and intelligence director with the association. "This investigation clearly shows what can be achieved when police forces work together."

To avoid becoming a victim to a skimming operation, Crowell recommended residents use their hand and body to conceal the keypad when entering their PIN, check ATMs to make sure all



MICHAEL IVANIN / OAKVILLE BEAVER

SUSPECTS CAUGHT: Det. Brad Murray, left, and Det.-Const. Dwayne Perron, of Halton Police, speak to media Friday at an Oakville police station on the arrests made in a skimming operation active in Halton and the Greater Toronto Area since April 2010.

card slots look the same, be suspicious of signs directing them to use a particular ATM, review their credit card and bank account statements and contact their financial institution immediately if unknown transactions or withdrawals are present.

Police allege the suspects involved in these incidents are part of two separate criminal organizations who shared one credit card lab.

Charged with fraud over \$5,000, conspiracy to commit an indictable offence, and participation in a criminal organization are: Dmitri Chalenko, 28, Dennis Glukhov, 31, Viacheslav Glukhov, 31, Vadim

Glukhov, 53, Alla Glukhov, 53, and Matvey Tchirkov, 29, all of Vaughan; Makar Tchirkov, 24, Rishan Thayalachelvam, 29, and Geevan Negendran, 32, all of Markham; and Janesmathan Vilvarajah, 22, of Toronto.

Charged with fraud over \$5,000, conspiracy to commit an indictable offence, participation in a criminal organization, two counts of possession of instruments for use in forging credit cards and two counts of possession of credit card data are:

Viatcheslav Shevelev, 27, and Maksym Gaiderov, 22, both of Toronto.

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