

Contact: Chief Daniel Ward
Phone: (620) 441-4447
Fax: (620) 442-1410
dward@arkansascityks.gov

Police Department
City of Arkansas City
117 W. Central Ave.
Arkansas City, KS 67005



News Release

Police await extradition of suspected ATM skimmer from Texas

Local ATMs hit in December 2018 by suspects; some bank accounts affected

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (February 13, 2019) — The Arkansas City Police Department is awaiting the extradition from Texas of one of the suspects in the “skimming” of account information from local ATMs.

A Houston, Texas, man is being held on a Cowley County District Court warrant stemming from three incidents reported to the Arkansas City Police Department in November and December of 2018.

Vasile Serban, 18, was served with the warrant while he was in custody in Texas for related offenses and an immigration hold. The district court issued a warrant on Feb. 6, listing a bond amount of \$100,000 in connection with various financial crimes and thefts that occurred in Arkansas City.

Among the charges are three counts of theft by deception, one count each of criminal damage to property and theft, and more than 100 counts of identity theft. Police still are gathering information for the identity theft charges while they wait for Serban to be extradited back to Kansas for prosecution.

Police were notified in December 2018 that credit and debit card-skimming devices had been located on two automated teller machines (ATMs) in Ark City. Local banks notified affected customers.

The department requests that anyone whose information was compromised as a result of these incidents please call ACPD Capt. Eric Burr at (620) 441-6601 or email him at acpd@arkcity.org. (After hours, please leave a voicemail message.)

A male and a female suspect were identified from security camera footage. The suspects were driving a maroon four-door Volkswagen Jetta, with a model year between 2006 and 2010.

Anyone who has any information about this crime or any other suspects in the case is asked to call ACPD Sgt. Jason Legleiter at (620) 441-4444.

Those wishing to remain anonymous may contact Cowley County Crime Stoppers, which offers rewards of up to \$2,000 for information leading to an arrest.

For immediate release

more

Call (620) 442-7777 in Arkansas City or (620) 221-7777 in Winfield, or visit www.tipsubmit.com or accs.crimestoppersweb.com to make an anonymous report.

An anonymous tip also can be submitted by texting ACTIPS to 847411.

Incident details

On Dec. 20, 2018, an alert bank employee in Arkansas City located what was suspected to be a credit card skimming device on an ATM.

Officers responded to collect the device and quickly began checking other ATMs in the city. A second device was found a short time later, at a different bank.

The Arkansas City Police Department, with the cooperation of the affected banks, was able to distribute images of a male and female driving a red Volkswagen Jetta that morning.

No viable leads were uncovered at that time. Further investigation determined that the pair had successfully skimmed credit card information the day before and “cashed out” cloned credit cards in the Wichita area for nearly \$18,000.

Also on Dec. 20, 2018, later in the day, officers took a report from Walmart that a male suspect had broken into the store’s iPhone display, removed an iPhone X Max and left the store without paying.

Surveillance video confirmed the description of the person who allegedly stole the iPhone matched that of a suspect from the credit card skimming incidents.

Investigators worked to secure video surveillance from several Wichita locations and were able to confirm that the same suspect was seen in all of the surveillance footage.

The male suspect, later identified as Serban, also had been captured on video surveillance from an earlier case reported to the Arkansas City Police Department in November 2018.

An Arkansas City bank reported on Nov. 8, 2018, that a person withdrew in excess of \$7,000 from an ATM on numerous transactions. The accounts corresponded to a bank in Texas.

A comparison of the video surveillance showed the suspect from the December 2018 incidents. It was thought that the suspect had used cloned credit cards to execute the transactions.

A call to the police department reported that one of the skimmed accounts from Dec. 19, 2018, was used Dec. 31, 2018, at a convenience store in Houston. As a result, a local media outlet ran a story on its website with the updated information that the skimming suspects could be in the Houston area.

more

The department used its Twitter account to circulate the suspect's picture again on Jan. 3, since the account has numerous followers in Texas.

Within a few days, investigators received a phone call from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, requesting more photos of the suspects. Once those were provided, the investigators established contacts with other members of the Department of Homeland Security, the South Carolina State Police, the United States Secret Service and the Fort Bend County, Texas, Sheriff's Office.

This network of investigators, who routinely work credit card skimming cases from the East coast to the Midwest, was able to determine the identity of the suspect quickly.

Upon confirming the identity of the suspect through federal records, Arkansas City investigators began to research the suspect's background and found a history of financial crimes

It also was discovered that Serban possibly is tied to a string of iPhone thefts from retail outlets stretching from Chicago to Texas.

In coordination with the Houston Police Department and the Secret Service in Houston, the investigation began to narrow its focus to a specific neighborhood just a few blocks from the convenience store that had triggered the new lead.

Investigators received a call Jan. 31 from a San Marcos, Texas, detective who informed them that he had seen news articles and social media posts about these crimes, and that San Marcos police had stopped and arrested a suspect for possessing cloned credit cards and a device to make those cards.

The suspect's name and date of birth matched the information gathered by Arkansas City police investigators and photographs confirmed the same.

Officers worked to secure an arrest warrant for Serban in connection with financial crimes and the theft of the iPhone from Walmart in Arkansas City. The department learned that an immigration hold had been placed on Serban, as well. The investigation will continue through Serban's extradition to Kansas while investigators gather information from local residents who have fallen victim to credit card skimming.

Local banks will be contacting account holders whose information was compromised and ask them to contact the Arkansas City Police Department by phone or email, to enable the department to file identity theft charges for each individual account that was compromised. Additionally, the department will submit the two devices it collected to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation to reveal data skimmed by both devices through midday on Dec. 20, 2018.

###