

NEWS ADVISORY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 2, 2017

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Page 1 of 2

ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVEN T. MARSHALL, JOINED BY SOUTHSIDE CHIEF OF POLICE CHRIS JONES, ETOWAH COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY JODY WILLOUGHBY AND U.S. SECRET SERVICE, ANNOUNCE ARREST AND ARREST WARRANT IN DEBIT CARD SKIMMING OPERATION AFFECTING ALABAMA AND THREE OTHER STATES

(MONTGOMERY) – Alabama Attorney General Steven T. Marshall joined Southside Chief of Police Chris Jones, Etowah County District Attorney Jody Willoughby and U.S. Secret Service Special Agent in Charge Michael Williams in announcing Tuesday an arrest and an arrest warrant for an additional suspect in a multi-state debit card skimming operation that stole over \$43,000 from debit card holders in Alabama and three other states. Seven banks and more than 300 individuals in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Colorado are believed to have been victimized by the skimmers.

On April 19, 2017, investigators with the Southside Police Department and agents with the Alabama Attorney General’s Office traveled to the Macon, Georgia area to conduct a joint operation with the Bibb County, Georgia Sheriff’s Office and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to apprehend suspects in connection with a debit card skimming operation initially discovered in Southside.

Janique Shontie Crafter, age 29 of Macon, Georgia was taken into custody by the Bibb County, Georgia Sheriff’s Office where she was charged with financial transaction card fraud forgery and financial identity fraud. Crafter, who is currently in custody in Bibb County, Georgia, awaits extradition to Alabama where she faces charges for Theft of Property First Degree and Identity Theft in Etowah County.

Authorities in Alabama and Georgia identified the second suspect as James Edward Faulks, II, age 37, of Macon, Georgia. Faulks, who is also wanted in Georgia on previous warrants, remains at-large at this time.

On April 13, 2017, agents of the Alabama Attorney General’s Office were contacted by the Southside Police Department about a possible gas pump skimmer. With the assistance of a local financial institution, law enforcement agents traced the skimming to an area gas station. After securing surveillance video, agents were able to obtain the license plate number of the suspects and tracked them to Macon, Georgia.

“The debit card information that was skimmed in Southside was used to make illegal purchases in Vestavia Hills, Hoover, Pelham, Moody, Leeds and Oxford in Alabama, and Atlanta,

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LaGrange and Macon in Georgia,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Had it not been for the vigilance of a local financial institution in discovering these suspicious transactions and in notifying law enforcement, this criminal activity might still be occurring. Debit card skimming is a serious problem, and the most effective way to turn the tables on crooks is to shut them down early. I’m proud to say teamwork between a local business and law enforcement made a positive difference in this case. In particular, I would like to commend Family Savings Credit Union in Gadsden for its assistance in this case.”

“This case serves as the personification of cooperation among law enforcement agencies,” said Southside Deputy Chief of Police Philip Roberson. “Officers, agents and deputies, working together across both county and state lines, exemplified professionalism in their unified effort to seek justice for the victims. The tireless dedication of the law enforcement officers involved in this case has ensured that the individuals responsible for these criminal actions will answer for the crimes they perpetrated against hundreds of unknowing victims.”

"The quick identification of these individuals and the halting of their skimming operation highlights the absolute commitment to excellence, pursuit of justice, and incredible collaboration among many different agencies that I am proud to see occur as District Attorney," said Etowah County District Attorney Jody Willoughby. "I am thankful every day that I have the opportunity to serve Etowah County alongside this caliber of law enforcement officers."

U.S. Secret Service Special Agent in Charge Michael Williams also praised the quick response and substantial cooperation between law enforcement and the bank. “As you can see from this case, these types of skimming and credit card fraud operations often involve multiple states and jurisdictions. The criminals are aware of the problems that this can cause for both law enforcement and financial institutions in developing cases for prosecution. However, in this case, the message being sent is very clear – financial institutions and law enforcement at every level are on the lookout for these skimming operations and we will find you wherever you may be.”

Investigators and agents are also working with the United States Secret Service to develop possible federal charges. At this time, the case in Alabama will be prosecuted by the Etowah County District Attorney’s Office.

Officials warn the public to be vigilant while using debit and credit cards at gas stations. When buying gas, it is best to pay the service station attendant rather than at the pump.