

NEWS ADVISORY
Luther Strange
Alabama Attorney General



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ATTORNEY GENERAL LUTHER STRANGE, JOINED BY OZARK POLICE CHIEF MARLOS WALKER AND BALDWIN COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE OFFICIALS, ANNOUNCE ARRESTS IN A DEBIT CARD SKIMMING OPERATION THAT CROSSED ALABAMA AND SURROUNDING STATES

(MONTGOMERY) – Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange, joined by Ozark Police Chief Marlos Walker and Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office representatives, announced Thursday the arrests of two individuals for their role in an apparent multi-state debit card skimming scheme that bilked unsuspecting victims in Alabama and surrounding states of thousands of dollars.

On December 21, 2016, Reiner Perez Rives, age 34 and Eunises Llorca Meneses, age 30, both of the Orlando, Florida area, were apprehended by deputies of the Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office and investigators of the Attorney General’s Office. Rives and Meneses face charges from the Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office for Trafficking in Stolen Identities, Identity Theft and an Illegally Obtained or an Illegally Possessed Credit Card. Rives also awaits 15 counts of Identity Theft to be served by the Ozark Police Department. Additional charges may be filed in both jurisdictions and in surrounding states pending further review of recovered evidence and the identification of other victims.

On December 13, 2016, the Ozark Police Department contacted investigators of the Alabama Attorney General’s Office seeking assistance in solving approximately eight identity theft cases that had occurred within two days. Investigators traced five of the thefts to a local gas station where a skimming device wrapped in electrical tape was bundled with wires inside a gas pump. The two suspects were later identified after one of the victim’s debit cards was traced to an unauthorized purchase at a Bristol, Virginia gas station. A surveillance video of the suspect’s license plate revealed a rental car linked to Reiner Perez Rives. Attorney General investigators, working with the Ozark Police Department, tracked Rives and Meneses to Texas. The suspects were apprehended as they traveled back through Alabama by the Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office which was alerted by the Attorney General’s Office.

The Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office and agents of the Attorney General’s Office seized from the suspects \$6,490 in cash, 39 stolen debit card numbers with PINs and an additional 315 gift cards with an undetermined amount of personal information. Rives and Meneses are currently being held in the Baldwin County jail.

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“Thanks to the vigilance of two south Alabama law enforcement agencies on opposite sides of the state working with investigators from the Attorney General’s Office, two operators of a multi-state debit card skimming operation are behind bars today and their crime spree is at an end,” said Attorney General Strange.

“I would like to commend the Ozark Police Department for alerting agents of the Attorney General’s Office to a string of identity thefts that quickly turned into a multi-state surveillance of two individuals believed to be stealing debit card pin numbers of customers at an Ozark gas station. Additionally, I want to personally thank the Baldwin County Sheriff’s Office for assisting in the apprehension of the two suspects. This was a well coordinated law enforcement operation that facilitated the quick identification and capture of these two individuals.”

Thus far, the Attorney General’s Office has determined that victims’ card information has been used by the suspects in Marianna, Midway, Ocala and Orlando, Florida; in Athens, Clanton, Falkville, Huntsville, Madison, Montgomery, and Prattville, Alabama; Baileytown, Bristol, Cookville, Kingston Knoxville, Lenoir City and Rockwood, Tennessee; and in Bristol, Ellison, Meadowview and Wytheville, Virginia.

“We are working with federal law enforcement and other local and state agencies throughout the southeast to identify other victims and more points of compromise. People living near or traveling through these areas should check their bank and credit card statements for any unusual activity and report it to their local law enforcement,” said Attorney General Strange.

Attorney General Strange further added that the public should be particularly vigilant while using debit and credit cards at gas stations. “When buying gas it is best to directly pay the service station attendant rather than at the pump. Furthermore, avoid using debit cards to buy gas since PIN numbers are easier for skimmers to steal. Be cautious this Christmas season and don’t take chances with your hard-earned money.”