

## Five arrested in \$45 mn 'cyber heist'

November 18 2013

---



A person takes out Euro banknotes from an automated teller machine at a cash point in Berlin on August 28, 2013

Five people were arrested Monday following a global "cyber heist" in which hackers stole \$45 million by overriding the cash withdrawal limits of prepaid debit cards, US officials said.

According to the US Justice Department, those arrested were said to be members of the New York cell of an "international cybercrime organization, which used sophisticated intrusion techniques to hack into

the systems of [financial institutions](#), steal prepaid debit card data, and make fraudulent ATM withdrawals on a global scale."

Officials said the cyber-ring managed to steal \$45 million in late 2012 and early 2013 by manipulating the limits of prepaid [debit cards](#) from Abu Dhabi-based National Bank of Ras Al-Khaimah and Bank Muscat of Oman.

The five arrested individuals face charges unsealed in an indictment. Eight others were charged in May.

This type of heist is known in criminal circle as an "unlimited operation." Two were allegedly carried out: first on December 22 last year and again on February 19 and 20 this year.

In the first heist, more than 4,500 ATM transactions were conducted in some 20 countries around the world, resulting in \$5 million in losses. In the second in February 2013, cybercells in 24 countries withdrew about \$40 million from ATMs, according to officials.

In the initial stage, taking several months, sophisticated hackers allegedly infiltrated credit card processors' computer networks, looking into databases of prepaid debit cards, a tool used often by employers and aid organizations.

Breaking into the system, the hackers eliminated withdrawal limits imposed by banks.

Next, the cybergang distributed the [debit card numbers](#) to its street associates called "cashers," who loaded more magnetic stripe cards, like gift cards, with the stolen data.

Those arrested on Monday were identified as Anthony Diaz, Saul

Franjul, Saul Genao, Jaindhi Polanco and Jose Angeley Valerio.

"As alleged, just a few months ago, after exploiting cyber-weaknesses in the financial system to steal millions from ATMs, these defendants were packing bags to the brim with stolen cash, destined for the cybercriminal organizers of these attacks," said US Attorney Loretta Lynch.

"Today, we have sent them packing once again—but this time, to jail. We will not relent until all those responsible for these financially devastating cybercrimes are brought to justice."

Authorities said newly seized photographic evidence revealed that the defendants sent \$800,000 of cash proceeds in luggage by bus for delivery to a cyberheist organizer.

A sixth defendant, Franklyn Ferreira, is a fugitive from justice.

Of those charged earlier this year, four have pleaded guilty to charges in the case.

© 2013 AFP

Citation: Five arrested in \$45 mn 'cyber heist' (2013, November 18) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-11-mn-cyber-heist.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--