Texas Financial Crimes Intelligence Center
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NEWS RELEASE

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Three Romanian Nationals Arrested in Multi-Agency Skimming Investigation

SAN ANTONIO, TX – The Texas Financial Crimes Intelligence Center (FCIC) led a multi-agency investigation that resulted in the arrest of three Romanian nationals accused of operating an organized skimming scheme targeting retailers across Texas.

The investigation began in June 2026 after local retailers requested assistance with multiple reports of point-of-sale skimming devices. Investigators determined the suspects were installing skimming devices at payment terminals throughout West Texas to steal Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card information and credit card data from consumers in Amarillo, Abilene, Lubbock, and San Angelo.

"Financial crimes like skimming don't just steal money—they undermine confidence in the everyday transactions Texans rely on," said Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation Executive Director Courtney Arbour. "This investigation reflects the strength of the partnerships between FCIC, our law enforcement partners, and retailers across the state. Working together, we are protecting Texans and disrupting organized criminal activity."

"The economy of Texas and all of the United States is under attack from multiple transnational criminal groups looking to steal as much as they can from an open and free market society," said Texas FCIC Director, Adam Colby. "The Texas FCIC exists to prevent as much financial loss as possible and dismantle the criminal groups responsible. The Texas FCIC's primary mission is to protect Texans and the Texas economy. This case is another example of what the FCIC does every day."

Working with local retailers, FCIC Special Agents along with Lubbock, Amarillo, Abilene police departments developed investigative leads that identified the suspects traveling between West Texas and the San Antonio area and obtained warrants for their arrest. Investigators determined that the three suspects are Romanian nationals believed to be affiliated with a large transnational organized crime group.

On Thursday, July 16, 2026, FCIC Special Agents, with assistance from the Texas Department of Public Safety Criminal Investigations Division (San Antonio), Department of Homeland Security Investigations, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, arrested the three suspects in the 2300 Block of Austin Highway in San Antonio.

During the investigation, law enforcement recovered multiple point-of-sale skimming devices, preventing an estimated $6 million in financial losses to Texas consumers and businesses.

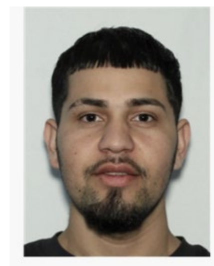
All three suspects were booked into the Bexar County Jail and have each been charged with Engaging in Organized Criminal Activity, a first-degree felony. These cases will be prosecuted in Randall, Lubbock, Potter, and Bexar counties.

The following individuals were arrested:

- Sebastian Ionut Stefan Bratu
- Francesco Matei
- Iosiv-Roberto Curea


Sebastian Ionut Stefan BRATU


Francesco MATEI


Iosiv-Roberto CUREA

Consumers can help protect themselves from skimming by inspecting card readers before use, covering the keypad when entering a PIN, monitoring account activity regularly, and promptly reporting suspicious transactions to their financial institution. Anyone who suspects a credit card skimmer on a gas pump should report it to www.tdlr.texas.gov/skimmers.

About the Texas FCIC

The TX FCIC is dedicated to disrupting organized financial crime through proactive investigations, cutting-edge forensics, and actionable intelligence. By minimizing bureaucracy and empowering unique problem-solving, TX FCIC leverages advanced technology and strategic partnerships to connect cases, apprehend criminals, and protect communities across Texas and beyond.

Based in Tyler, the TX FCIC is staffed by law enforcement officers and intelligence analysts who investigate complex organized financial crimes that threaten Texas citizens and the state economy. The Center supports law enforcement agencies and industry partners statewide through intelligence sharing, forensic analysis, and training. The Smith County District Attorney's Office manages day-to-day operations, with expenses reimbursed by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. Learn more at fcic.texas.gov.

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