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**111 INDIVIDUALS CHARGED IN MASSIVE INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY THEFT
AND COUNTERFEIT CREDIT CARD OPERATION BASED IN QUEENS**

Bank Tellers, Store Employees And Restaurant Workers Allegedly Skimmed Customers' Personal I.D.; Shoppers Allegedly Sent On Nationwide Shopping Sprees With Counterfeit Credit Cards To Buy High-End Goods That Were Later Fenced; Fake Cards Allegedly Used to Purchase Tickets and Board Airplanes

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, today announced that 111 individuals have been indicted in the largest identity theft takedown in U.S. history. The defendants, members of five organized forged credit card and identity theft rings based in Queens County and having ties to Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, are charged in ten indictments with stealing the personal credit information of thousands of unwitting American and European consumers and costing these individuals, financial institutions and retail businesses more than \$13 million in losses over a 16-month period. Eighty-six of the defendants are in custody and twenty-five are presently being sought.

In addition, nearly two dozen of the defendants are variously charged in six indictments with participating in burglaries and robberies throughout Queens County. For example, four defendants are charged with conspiring to commit a bank robbery in Forest Hills. Five are charged with stealing more than \$95,000 worth of cargo from Kennedy Airport and seven are accused of stealing approximately \$850,000 worth of computer equipment from the Citigroup Building in Long Island City.

“This is by far the largest – and certainly among the most sophisticated – identity theft/credit card fraud cases that law enforcement has come across,” said District Attorney Brown. “Credit card fraud and identity theft are two of the fastest growing crimes in the United States, afflicting millions of victims and costing billions of dollars in losses to consumers, businesses and financial institutions. Many of the defendants charged today are accused of going on nationwide shopping sprees, staying at five-star hotels, renting luxury automobiles and private jets, and purchasing tens of thousands of dollars worth of high-end electronics and expensive handbags and jewelry with forged credit cards that contained the account information of unsuspecting consumers. Even after the culprits are caught and prosecuted, their victims are still faced with the difficult task of having to repair their credit ratings and financial reputations. In some cases, that process can take years.”

Police Commissioner Kelly said, “These weren’t holdups at gunpoint, but the impact on victims was the same. They were robbed. We assigned detectives to financial crimes because of the potential victimization is so great, especially as the use of credits cards and their vulnerability to identity theft have grown along with the Internet.”

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District Attorney Brown said that more than ninety of the defendants have been charged in five indictments charging 784 pattern acts with, among other crimes, Enterprise Corruption under New York State's Organized Crime Control Act. They are accused of being members and associates of organized criminal enterprises that operated in Queens County and elsewhere and that, between May 2010 and September 2011, systematically schemed to defraud thousands of unsuspecting consumers and financial institutions – such as American Express, Visa, MasterCard and Discover Card.

According to the indictments, the defendants fraudulently obtained credit card account numbers through various means and which were then used to manufacture forged credit and identification cards. Once the counterfeit cards were created, according to the indictments, they were ultimately given to teams of “shoppers” who were sent out on shopping expeditions in New York, Florida, Massachusetts, Los Angeles and other areas of the United States to purchase high-end electronics and other merchandise – such as designer handbags, game consoles and jewelry – which either had been requested or could easily be fenced and re-sold, typically over the Internet.

It is alleged that during the shopping sprees, some of the shoppers used forged credit cards to stay at such five-star hotels as the Fontainebleau and The Royal Palm in Miami Beach and the Las Casitas Village, the high-end private villas of the El Conquistador in Puerto Rico. They are also alleged to have used forged credit cards to rent such luxurious automobiles as Lamborghinis and Porsches and, in one instance, a private jet to take them from New York to Florida.

The District Attorney said that the investigation – dubbed “Operation Swiper” – leading to the indictments and this week's arrests began in October 2009 when police officers assigned to the Police Department's Identity Theft Squad commenced a joint investigation with the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau into an identity theft ring operating in the South Ozone Park section of Queens. The investigation involved physical surveillance, intelligence gathering and court-authorized electronic eavesdropping on dozens of different telephones in which thousands of conversations were intercepted – many of which required translation from Russian, Mandarin and Arabic to English.

The indictments charge that Imran Khan, Ali Khweiss, Anthony Martin, Sanjay (a/k/a/ Rocky) Deowsarran and Amar Singh were “bosses” of criminal enterprises and received the necessary raw material – lists of credit card account numbers and various blank credit cards. The materials were alleged to have come from overseas – unknown individuals in such places as Russia, Libya, Lebanon and China – or from statewide suppliers, such as “skimmers” (individuals who worked in a restaurant or bar, retail store or financial institution and used a skimming device to swipe a consumer's credit card information) or “Internet suppliers” (who obtained credit card accounts through illegal web sites).

According to the indictments, the boss then allegedly sent the stolen account numbers to a “manufacturer” who re-encoded the information onto the magnetic strips of blank credit cards using a “reverse” skimming device. The manufacturer was also allegedly responsible for putting the written four security numbers on the front of a credit card, as well as the seven security numbers on the back, as well as writing and embossing the account number on the credit card. In some cases, it is alleged, the manufacturer also placed the artwork and logos from financial institutions on the blank cards. In other cases, the manufacturer also allegedly made forged government identification - such as a New York State driver's license – to match the name that was on the forged credit card.

Once the forged credit cards were completed, according to the charges, the items were distributed

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to the criminal enterprise's "shopping crews," which consisted of "crew leaders" and "shoppers." Crew leaders allegedly supplied the fraudulent items to the shoppers and oversaw their planned shopping expeditions throughout New York and the United States. It is alleged, for example, that crew leaders would, at times, direct their shoppers to purchase requested electronic merchandise in a specific store or mall. Among the local malls targeted by the shoppers were Queens Mall, the Westchester Mall, the Americana Mall, the Roosevelt Field Mall, the Walt Whitman Mall and the Smithtown Mall. It is further alleged that, at times, the shoppers shipped out-of-state purchases back to New York via Federal Express and UPS and used the forged credit cards to purchase plane tickets.

According to the charges, aiding the shoppers were collusive store owners or employees who worked within a particular retail store where the shoppers were making their purchases or in a bank where they had access to cardholder information and could check the information for high value targets and/or steal credit card information from the available files. In the Khan/Box criminal enterprise, according to the charges, attorney Susan Persaud assisted the enterprise by advising her clients prospectively on how to commit new crimes and evade law enforcement. In addition, Persaud allegedly obtained payment in the form of illegally obtained items, such as expensive designer shoes.

Sometimes, it is alleged, a fraud ring would employ an "impersonator," an individual who contacted financial institutions or retail stores and impersonated the true cardholder and made inquiries in order to check the viability of the credit. Also employed were "bust out crews," individuals who used the skimmed information of another member of the criminal enterprise to make thousands of dollars in purchases. For example, it is alleged that defendant Nelson Feliciano, who owns a security firm, allowed others to make a counterfeit credit card using his business account information and to use that account to make \$50,000 in purchases before claiming that the charges were fraudulent and that he was a victim of identity theft.

According to the indictments, once a shopper purchased high-end merchandise with forged credit cards, the merchandise was turned over to the crew leader who, in turn, gave the merchandise to the boss of the operation. The boss would then allegedly contact a "fence" – such as Fnu Gustawain, Kah Sheng Poh, Allen Lam or Benny Ahoo Ahdoot – and sell the merchandise to the fence at a discounted price. The fence, in turn, would then allegedly offer the merchandise for re-sale to the public. It is alleged, for example, that Gustawain purchased Apple products and other high-end electronics while Ahdoot would be contacted regarding high-end jewelry, specifically watches such as Rolexes and Breitlings.

District Attorney Brown noted that, as part of the investigation, court-authorized search warrants were executed earlier this week at fifteen locations throughout New York City and Long Island – including several "mills" where the fraudulent documents were generated. Among the items allegedly recovered as a result of the search warrants were approximately \$650,000 in cash, seven handguns (two defaced), a box truck full of electronics, computers, shoes and watches, skimmers, card readers, embossers and various amounts of raw material, such as blank credit cards and fake identifications.

In addition to the counterfeit credit card and identity theft charges, some of the defendants are accused of participating in burglaries and robberies. For example:

- Derrick Singh, Parisam Itwaru, Tahidul Parvez and two other unapprehended individuals are accused of stealing cargo containing drill bits and power tool accessories with an aggregate value of \$95,338, from Qantas Airways at Kennedy Airport in October 2010;

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- Imran Khan, Travis Lootawan, Kendall McLean and an unapprehended individual are charged with conspiring to rob a branch of the Flushing Savings Bank on Continental Avenue in Forest Hills, Queens, in July 2011. It is alleged that police – alerted to the plan through intercepted telephone calls – placed a marked police vehicle in front of the bank, causing the defendants to abort their plan; and
- Jonathan Ortiz, Wilfred Rodriguez, Travis Hassang, Angel Quinones and two other unapprehended individuals are charged with stealing approximately \$850,000 in computer equipment from the Citigroup Building, located at One Court Square in Long Island City on August 25, 2011. It is alleged that defendant Quinones worked at the building as a security guard for Allied Barton Security Services, which was contracted to Citicorp, and that defendant Oluwo was a former employee of Citicorp. In addition, defendant Ortiz’s mother, Maria Ortiz, is charged with hindering prosecution by logging into her son’s Facebook account in order to create an alibi defense for him.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Enrico Morriello, Edwin Romero and Dafeng Zeng, of the New York City Police Department’s Identity Theft Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Ruperto Aguilar and the command of Deputy Inspector Gregory T. Antonsen, of the Organized Theft and Identity Theft Task Force, and the overall supervision of Deputy Chief Jeremiah Quinlan, commander of the Special Investigations Division, and Chief of Detectives Phil T. Pulaski.

Assistant District Attorneys Jonathan D. Scharf and Edward K. Suh, of the Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case, with the assistance of paralegal Kathleen P. Feeney, under the supervision of Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

District Attorney Brown expressed his appreciation to: Chief Investigator Lawrence J. Festa and Deputy Chief Investigator Albert D. Velardi, of the Queens District Attorney’s Detective Bureau; the Queens District Attorney’s Detective Squad under the supervision of Captain John M. Zanfardino; Inspector General Robert E. Van Etten, Deputy Inspector General Michael Nestor and Detective Steve Poulos, of the Office of the Inspector General of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey; Detective Frank Crimarco, under the supervision of Detective Sergeant Raymond DiLena and the overall supervision of Inspector Brian Sullivan and Chief Anthony Fitzgerald of the Port Authority Police Department’s Detective Bureau; the United States Secret Service, specifically Special Agent Ken Ziesman under the supervision of Supervising Special Agent Ari Branoff and the overall supervision of Special Agent-in-Charge Brian Parr; the Offices of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina and the Eastern District of Kentucky; Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney Jason E. Hiltz, of the 54th Judicial Circuit, Burlington, Kentucky, under the supervision of Commonwealth’s Attorney Linda Tally Smith; the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati Airport Police Department; the Miami Beach Police Department; and David Faber, Acting Chief of Police of the Utica, Michigan, Police Department for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The District Attorney also thanked Citibank, Chase Bank, Bank of America, Capital One Bank, Flushing Savings Bank, American Express, Visa, MasterCard and Discover Card, as well as Apple, Inc., Nordstrom’s, Bloomingdale’s, Macy’s and Best Buy.

It should be noted that an indictment is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed

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innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.

ADDENDUM

THE KHAN/BOX ENTERPRISE (35 defendants are charged in two indictments/35 defendants are in custody)	
The defendants are variously charged with enterprise corruption, first- and second-degree identity theft, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth- and third-degree attempted grand larceny petit larceny, fourth-degree criminal facilitation and fifth-degree conspiracy.	
NAME	ALLEGED ROLE
Imran Khan	Boss
Travis Lootawan	Co-boss
Jonathan Ortiz, Wilfredo L. Rodriguez, Edward Solomon and James Morgan	Crew Leaders
Leroy Linton, Ali Khweiss and Myles Beepath	Manufacturers
Carlos Plaza	Supplier of account numbers
Ali Khweiss	Suppliers of blank credit cards
Vishnu S. Harilal, Lilian Mera, Vincent Mineo, Regan Solomon, Jessica Torres, Justin DeJesus and Nicholas Hines	Skimmers
Alvin A. Lootawan, Nelson Feliciano and Mahendra A. Lootawan	Bust Out Crew member
Stacy Manbahaul, Steven A. Bahadur and Imran Ibrahim	Collusive Bank Employees
Susan Persaud	Collusive Attorney
Samantha Ramgulam	Impersonator
Kendall McClean, Devin W. Quinones, Travis HassangAnthony Martin, Jacklyn Gunn, Leidy Rodriguez and Christopher Dwhaj	Shoppers
Fnu Gustawian and Benny Ahoo Adhoot	Fences

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THE ALI ENTERPRISE

(17 defendants are charged in two indictments/13 defendants are in custody)

The defendants are variously charged with enterprise corruption, first- and second-degree identity theft, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree attempted grand larceny, petit larceny, fourth-degree criminal facilitation and fifth-degree conspiracy.

NAME	ALLEGED ROLE
Ali Khweiss	Boss
Travis Lootawan, Jonathan Ortiz and Wilfredo Rodriguez	Crew Leaders
Leroy Linton	Manufacturer
Ravindra Singh, Matthew Thompson, Sarah Genere, Leidy Rodriguez, Ziad Mohamed, Danielle Fernandez and Victoria Duran	Shoppers
Kah Sheng Poh	Fence

THE ANTHONY MARTIN ENTERPRISE

(9 defendants are charged in two indictments/8 defendants are in custody)

The defendants are variously charged with enterprise corruption, first- and second-degree identity theft, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree attempted grand larceny petit larceny fourth-degree criminal facilitation and fifth-degree conspiracy.

NAME	ALLEGED ROLE
Anthony Martin	Boss/Crew Leader
Carlos Plaza	Supplier of account numbers
Ali Khweiss and Leroy Linto	Manufacturers
Michael Severino, Robert Martin and Danielle Fernandez	Shoppers
Kah Sheng Poh	Fence

THE ROCKY ENTERPRISE

(23 defendants are charged in two indictments/13 of the defendants are in custody)

The defendants are variously charged with enterprise corruption, first- and second-degree identity theft, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree attempted grand larceny petit larceny and fifth-degree conspiracy.

NAME	ALLEGED ROLE
Sanjay Deowsarran	Boss
Irina Pervukhina	Underboss
Svetlana Turakaeva, Romel Mangel, Sayeed Mohammed and Maria Hernandez	Crew Leaders
Dallas Chester, Julia Fair, Sayeed Mohammed, Alexey Vaselevith Kolyga, Reginald McMillian and Tina Mahabir	Shoppers
Allen Lam	Fence

THE AMAR ENTERPRISE

(29 defendants are charged in two indictments/21 of the defendants are in custody)

The defendants are variously charged with enterprise corruption first-, second- and third-degree identity theft, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, fourth-degree attempted grand larceny, petit larceny and fifth-degree conspiracy.

NAME	ALLEGED ROLE
Amar Singh	Boss
Neha Punjabi-Singh	Personal Assistant/wife to Boss
Sayeed Mohammed, Randolph Ramroop, Terrance Singh, Ravi Ramroop, Pedro Manuel Guzman-Cuevas, Syson Laguerre and Kamal Sanasi	Crew Leaders
Ahmar Lacorte, Margaret Mortel, Faried Mohamed, Sunil Ramroop, Kamal Sanasie, Michael Doodnarine, Darren Percival, Andre Shewtjon, Ericka Kidd, Sheena Franklyn, Kesho Baboolal and Angelika Wronowska	Shoppers
Allen Lam	Fence

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THE JFK HEIST (5 defendants are charged in one indictment/4 of the defendants are in custody)	
NAME	CHARGES
Derrick Singh, Parisam Itwaru, Tahidul Parvaz and Michael Tumasar	The defendants are variously charged with first-degree attempted grand larceny, second-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument and fourth-degree conspiracy.

THE CITIGROUP THEFT (7 defendants are charged in one indictment/5 of the defendants are in custody)	
NAME	CHARGES
Jonathan Ortiz, Wilfred Rodriguez, Travis Hassang and Angel Quinones.	The defendants are charged with second-degree grand larceny and second-degree criminal possession of stolen property.
Maria Ortiz	The defendant is charged with second-degree hindering prosecution.

ATTEMPTED BANK ROBBERY (4 defendants are charged in one indictment/3 of the defendants are in custody)	
NAME	CHARGES
Imran Khan, Kendall McClean and Travis Lootawan	The defendants are charged with second-degree attempted robbery and fourth-degree conspiracy.

OTHER CRIMES (10 defendants are charged in three indictments/9 of the defendants are in custody)	
NAME	CHARGES
Franciso Gonzalez	The defendant is charged with third-degree robbery
John Betancourt, Francisco Gonzalez, Devon Singh, Ali Khweiss and Reginald Nandallal	The defendants are charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, fourth-degree attempted grand larceny, first-degree identity theft and petit larceny
Carlos Plaza, Angelika Wronowska and Eury Rodriguez	The defendants are charged with second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property and first- and second-degree identity theft