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International card theft targets U.S. consumers

Cardholders were hit with small, hard-to-notice charges

By Chris Friedrich

More than a million American consumer card accounts were compromised in an international credit card scam.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a number of court requests in an attempt to shut down an international credit and debit card scam that involved around 1.3 million U.S. consumers. The Commission reports the total amount of false charges processed by the thieves was close to \$10 million over approximately a four-year period.

The scam involved charging small amounts on consumers' credit and debit cards, ranging from 20 cents to no more than \$10, processed by more than 100 fake merchant accounts set up to resemble genuine companies.

"It's easier to steal one \$1 from one million people than \$1 million from one person," stated the FTC in a [June 28 press release](#) about the thefts.

The money was collected by more than 16 dummy corporations the ring had set up in various Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

Although more than 1,000 consumers filed complaints with the FTC, which initiated the nine-month investigation, the majority of consumers took limited action in regards to their loss. The FTC speculates that because the amount of money was so small, consumers either failed to notice or simply didn't bother to address the problem.

The identities of the overseas individuals who masterminded the scam are still not clear. It is also unclear exactly how they managed to acquire consumers' debit or credit card numbers. FTC staff attorney Steven Wernikoff stated that during the course of the investigation, there was no discernable pattern between the type of card being abused and the scam.

Here is a list of some of the merchants whose name appeared on victims' billing statements that have been identified in the case:

Fake merchants steal millions			
ACM	Eureka	MARX	Site Services
Adele Services	Extra Path	Mera	Source Limited
Advanced Global Tech	Form Limited	MFG	Standard Six
AEI	Foto Fast	Name Services	SYS INC
Albion Group	Gamma	NETT	System Development
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BEI	Harry Dean	OM Extra	TLC Inc.
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CFM	Image Company	RSIPartners	World Trade
CFR	Images Services	RSS Inc.	World Wide Services
COS	IPS	Safeworks	YES
Data Services	ISSO	Search Company	
Den Enterprises	IVA	Search Group	
Dgen	Lang Group	Search Management	
Digest Limited	Light Flow	Search Services	
Don Partners	Link Group	SFR	
DwellTech	Link Services	Sigma	
Edge	List Services	Site Group	
ESTA	Mark Silver	Site Management	

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