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Two Romanian Nationals Plead Guilty in Connection With Federal Identity Theft Investigation

(Richmond, VA) – Mihail Iordan, age 38, and Wilhelm Cristian Neagu, age 29, both of Montreal, Canada, pled guilty today to bank fraud conspiracy and aggravated identity theft charges following a federal investigation that began in August 2007. Both defendants face up to 30 years of federal imprisonment and a fine of up to \$1,000,000 for bank fraud, as well as a mandatory, consecutive term of two years of imprisonment for aggravated identity theft, when sentenced by United District Judge Richard L. Williams on April 24, 2008. The defendants are Canadian citizens originally from Romania and have agreed to be deported to Canada following their anticipated prison terms. The pleas were announced by Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.

The defendants were initially arrested in August 2007 when it was discovered that skimming devices had been placed on two Wachovia ATMs located in the Metro-Richmond area. As part of the plea, the defendants admitted to fraudulently obtaining customer information encoded in debit cards and recoding that information onto blank Lowe's gift cards. The two then used the recoded cards to make over \$100,000 in fraudulent ATM withdrawals from the accounts of 76 Wachovia customers. Substantial assistance from Wachovia fraud investigators allowed law enforcement officers to make the arrests within three weeks of commencement of the scheme.

The case was investigated by law enforcement officers from the United States Secret Service, the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Chesterfield County Police Department as members of the Metro-Richmond Identity Theft Task Force. Other member agencies include: the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State; Richmond Police Department; and Henrico County Police Department. Prosecutions for the Task Force are handled by the United States Attorney's Office and the Office of the Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The case is being prosecuted

by Assistant United States Attorney Laura Colombell Marshall. For more information on the Task Force, including assistance for victims of identity theft, visit: www.richmondIDtheft.com.

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