



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OC Sheriff Public Affairs, 714-904-7042

'Bank Juggling' suspects arrested after stealing from elderly woman

SANTA ANA, Ca. (Sept. 29, 2023): Orange County Sheriff's Department investigators have arrested two men on suspicion of multiple felonies after they used a distraction scheme to steal \$50,000 from an elderly woman.

At approximately 11 a.m. on Sept. 19, a 79-year-old woman drove to a bank on Bolsa Chica Street in the city of Huntington Beach. She withdrew \$50,000 in cash and placed the money into an envelope, returned to her car and left the bank.

The victim returned home at approximately 12 p.m. and was approached by a suspect who asked for directions to a local hospital. While the victim was distracted, a second male suspect reached through her right rear window and stole the envelope from her purse.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department's North Investigative Unit and Directed Enforcement Team diligently pursued numerous leads, which led to the arrest of Ionut Marius Andrei, 42, and Stefan Romero Oprea, 38, both of Riverside. They were booked into the Orange County Jail on suspicion of felony grand theft, conspiracy to commit a crime and theft of an elderly person.

Investigators were able to link Andrei and Oprea to another incident in the city of Lake Forest where they approached a 72-year-old male who had recently withdrawn over \$5,000 in cash and had returned home. The victim stated he was approached in his garage by a male who asked for directions to a hospital. After the suspect had left, the victim returned to his car to retrieve the money from the center console, and it was gone.

Investigators believe there are additional victims and encourage anyone who may have experienced a similar crime to call the Orange County Sheriff's Department at 714-647-1829. Anonymous information may be provided through Orange County Crime Stoppers at 1-855-TIP-OCCS.

This type of crime has a slang term known as "bank juggling." Suspects pay close attention to bank customers, including ATM users, or check cashing stores to observe if the customer withdrew cash.

The suspect/s will follow the potential victim after they leave the bank and either confront and distract them at a secondary location or attempt to break into their car to steal the money, if left parked and unattended. Some suspects might even be demanding when attempting to take the money.

To avoid becoming a victim, it is important to be aware of your surroundings and limit distractions, especially cell phones. If possible, avoid carrying large amounts of cash and instead seek alternative ways to transfer funds. If you believe you are being followed from a



financial institution, immediately call 9-1-1. Keep in mind, high-end stores including electronics, jewelry and accessory retailers also are potential targets for criminals.

If you have been a victim of "bank jugging" or any type of theft or fraud it is important to immediately report it to local law enforcement.



Stefan Romero Oprea, 38



Ionut Marius Andrei, 42

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