They Swapped a Gas Station's Card Terminal and Stole More Than 30 Million Pesos: Four Arrested

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The gang allegedly switched the payment device for one of their own during a moment when an employee was distracted. Payments made by customers were then diverted to accounts under their control.

Here is how they were caught.

A multimillion-peso fraud against Shell

Four people were arrested as part of an investigation by the Buenos Aires provincial police Superintendence for Complex Crimes and Organized Crime, accused of belonging to a gang that carried out a 38 million peso fraud against the Shell company. The scheme ran at a service station in the San Martín district of Buenos Aires province.

The case opened in early May, when representatives of the oil company went to the Public Prosecutor's Office to report a multimillion-peso shortfall detected at one of its locations. That complaint started the case that led to the identification and arrest of the main suspects.

The swap caught on camera

The scheme under investigation involved fraudulent tampering with a Posnet device used to collect fuel payments. According to the investigation, the Economic Crimes Investigation Directorate gathered security camera footage that documents the moment a man, taking advantage of an instant when the forecourt attendant was distracted, stepped out of a Volkswagen Gol and swapped the electronic payment terminal.

That move let the doctored device operate for a long stretch of time, creating a financial gap the company only noticed when it ran a check of its accounts.

By analyzing electronic and banking records, investigators found that funds totaling 38 million pesos had been diverted to different accounts. The names on those accounts allowed prosecutors to move ahead with identifying the people involved.

The four arrested

The detainees were identified as Guillermo Sergio Carrizo, 42, René Brandan Rodrigo Maximiliano, 36, José Agustín Gauna, 26, and Florencia Alcaraz, 29. All four turned out to be the holders of the bank accounts where the transfers from the scheme landed.

The investigation was coordinated by prosecutor Verónica Pérez of UFIJ No. 8 and Guarantees Court No. 5 of the San Martín Judicial Department, under Judge Nicolás Schiavo. With the evidence gathered and the suspects linked to the detected transactions, the court authorized four raids on homes in the Almirante Brown district.

The raids and what comes next

During the raids, carried out by specialized personnel from the Economic Crimes Investigation Directorate, officers seized six cell phones that will undergo forensic review. The goal is a deeper look at the communications and financial movements tied to the scheme.

The investigation broke up the operation that hit Shell and put all the named suspects under arrest. The seized items and collected evidence will now go before the court, which will keep working to determine whether others took part and where the stolen funds ended up.