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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody's Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit Announces Arrest in SIM Card Swap Scam Case



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit is charging two individuals involved in a sophisticated money laundering and grand-theft operation. According to Attorney General Moody's CFEU and law enforcement investigation, Thomas Simmons solicited and paid Raymond Ortiz, an employee of a cellphone store in Florida, to execute SIM card swaps. This allowed Simmons to gain control of a victim's cellphone remotely and bypass two-factor authentications to steal nearly \$280,000 from the victim's bank account.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "These defendants used a SIM card swap scheme to steal hundreds of thousands of dollars from an unsuspecting victim who was on a flight — and only noticed that the fraud took place after he was back on the ground. Thanks to our Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit and our law enforcement partners, the only thing these sim swap criminals will be trading is their freedom for time behind bars."

According to the investigation, Ortiz and Simmons executed a SIM card swap on the victim's cellphone. After the SIM swap, Simmons waited until the victim got onto a flight and then bypassed two-factor authentications for a banking app while having control of the phone and while the victim could not stop the process. The victim only discovered the fraud after landing, when the victim's phone would not resume normal operations. After securing the funds,

Simmons bought cashier checks with the victim's money, which were used on personal expenses. Simmons committed these offenses while already under federal indictment for bank fraud.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office authorities assisted the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in arresting Ortiz in Tampa. Ortiz is charged with grand theft of more than \$100,000 and criminal use of personal identification information. U.S. Marshals took Simmons into custody in California and will be transported back to Florida. Simmons will be charged with grand theft of more than \$100,000, along with a charge for money laundering.

Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute this case.

In 2022, Attorney General Moody released a [Consumer Alert warning Floridians about SIM Swap scams](#). To guard against a SIM swap scam:

- Regularly change passwords as information can be leaked onto the dark web and scammers may wait months to act on the leaked information;
- Download a two-factor authentication app to generate one-time access codes directly to devices and do not use authenticator systems that call your phone number;
- Establish a strong PIN in order to access mobile carrier accounts;
- Consider using a mobile carrier security app to receive alerts about attempted accesses to an account; and
- Refrain, when possible, from providing or posting a cellphone number.

The number one sign that a victim is being targeted by a SIM Swap scam is no longer being able to make or receive calls or text messages. When this happens, find a working phone and call the carrier immediately.

Report SIM Swap scams to local law enforcement, the mobile carrier and to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at [IC3.gov](https://www.ic3.gov).

The CFEU is a team of criminal and civil attorneys in the Florida Attorney General's Office who work with Florida Department of Law Enforcement analysts and other law enforcement agencies to prosecute cybercrimes statewide.

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