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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution Secures a 5-Year Prison Sentence for Member of Romanian Crime Ring

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—The Florida Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a 5-year prison sentence for a Romanian crime ring member. Vasile Bricage stole more than \$38,000 in smartphones and other items from six Walmart locations across five Florida counties — all within the span of six days.

Acting Attorney General John Guard said, "This member of a Romanian crime ring targeted Walmart locations spanning five Florida counties — causing more than \$38,000 in losses. Now, thanks to our Statewide Prosecutors, he will pay for his crimes."

Vasile Bricage, working alongside co-defendant Antonio Briceag and two unknown female accomplices, stole smartphones and other items from Walmart locations in Citrus, Okaloosa, Pinellas, Santa Rosa and Sarasota counties. In several cases, Bricage and his accomplices entered the stores and proceeded to the electronics department. Then, members of the group would distract employees or act as lookouts while using an unknown implement to defeat the anti-theft devices at the phone display.

In one Citrus County incident, the group used a different strategy. Bricage, after browsing the electronics department, proceeded to the hardware section of the store and selected a black crowbar. The defendant then went back to the electronics department and pried two locked phone cabinets open, and the group stole 26 iPhones — valued at more than \$22,000. The damage to the cabinets totaled more than \$1,600.

The Office of Statewide Prosecution charged Bricage with racketeering, conspiracy to commit racketeering, retail theft over \$3,000, grand theft \$20,000 or more but less than \$100,000, and use or attempt to use any antishoplifting or inventory control device countermeasure. Bricage is a Romanian national currently under a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement hold.

OSP charged co-defendant Antonio Briceag with racketeering and conspiracy to commit racketeering. The co-defendant remains at large.

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office led this investigation.

Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Guillermo Vallejo prosecuted this case.

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