



FROM VENEZUELA TO DALLAS TO THE DAKOTAS, GANG MEMBERS INVOLVED IN ATM THEFT RING - THE CENTER SQUARE

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Photo courtesy of Ideogram.ai

Illegal border crossers from Venezuela with confirmed ties to the violent prison gang Tren de Aragua have been connected to an ATM theft ring in multiple states. The latest arrests occurred in North and South Dakota.

One recent arrest was made by West Fargo police of a 25-year-old man outside of a Gate City Bank branch. He was initially pulled over for a broken taillight but was arrested for felony theft after police discovered he was allegedly involved with bank ATM thefts in the Red River Valley.

“During that traffic stop, starts talking to the individual, who is here illegally, who is not a citizen of the United States. As he questions him, he ends up finding that there was over \$24,000 cash in his vehicle,” West Fargo Police Chief Pete Neilsen [told](#) Valley News Live. Upon searching the vehicle, police found facemasks, black latex gloves, a computer keyboard with several cables and wires, and more than \$24,000 in cash. According to court documents, he admitted to being involved with a group of hackers who “jackpot” ATMs to steal money.

He also allegedly gave up the name of two others involved in the theft ring that involved targeting banks in Fargo and West Fargo who were arrested on I-29 near Watertown, South Dakota in Codington County, KXLG News [reported](#).

“When you have someone that comes into your community and steals \$150,000, and that’s an illegal alien, and then leaves, one would think that the Feds would step in and say, ‘You know, I’m going to take this one,’” Nielsen said.

Last month, Farmers Branch Police Department in a Dallas suburb arrested five Venezuelan men illegally in the country believed to be part of a national ATM theft ring, The Center Square [reported](#).

The arrests in Dallas are part of a multi-agency national ATM theft investigation in multiple states including Colorado, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota and Wyoming. Investigators with the Department of Homeland Security’s Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, FBI, U.S. Marshals Service and U.S. Secret

Service are involved.



As are investigators from the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Financial Crimes Intelligence Center, Colorado Bureau of Investigations, Colorado State Police, the South Dakota Prosecutor's Office, and officials in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Campbell County, Wyoming, Meade County, South Dakota, Dona Ana County, New Mexico, and the Dallas County Sheriff's Office.

In July, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated and sanctioned TdA as a transnational criminal organization. In September, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott designated TdA as a foreign terrorist organization, launching a major initiative to target their operations, The Center Square [reported](#).

The U.S. Department of State is offering up to \$12 million in rewards for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of several TdA leaders "for conspiring to participate in, or attempting to participate in, transnational organized crime."

TdA gang members are known for violence, murder, kidnapping, extortion, bribery and human and drug trafficking and are linked to hundreds of law enforcement investigations nationwide.

Under the Biden administration, the greatest number of Venezuelan illegal border crossers were reported in U.S. history, more than one million, The Center Square [reported](#).

They're also among millions of illegal foreign nationals [identified](#) to be deported and more than 662,000 with criminal records identified to be deported that haven't been, The Center Square [reported](#).