

Three jailed in global eBay scam

**LONDON, England (AP) -- A British judge jailed three Romanians Friday for tricking thousands of eBay customers around the world into paying for nonexistent goods advertised on the Internet auction site.**

Nicolae Cretanu, 30, his wife Adriana Cretanu, 23, and George Titar, 26, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to obtain property by deception and money laundering.

Judge Duncan Matheson at Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court in London sentenced Nicolae Cretanu to 3 1/2 years in prison. The other two defendants received jail sentences of 2 1/2 years each.

More than half of the 3,000 victims were from the United States and they paid more than £250,000 -- about \$450,000 or 370,000 euros -- for advertised goods including cars, binoculars, parachute trousers and tickets to sporting events between July 2003 and May 2005.

Payment was sent by instant money transfer via Western Union, but none of the goods existed and the buyers were left empty-handed. eBay advises customers against using instant money transfers when paying for goods because of the risk of fraud.

Judge Matheson described the scam as a "major, sophisticated and well-designed fraud."

During the trial, prosecutors told the court that the three defendants transferred most of the stolen money to a criminal network in Romania, and spent the rest on their lifestyles.

Copyright 2005 The [Associated Press](#). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.