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Calif. woman held on fraud charges

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A California woman arrested on charges of credit card fraud is suspected of being a part of a group that uses fake credit cards to buy merchandise and have it shipped back to Los Angeles, local and federal authorities said.

Felicia Michelle Mitchell, 23, of Upland, Calif., was charged with seven counts of credit card fraud Wednesday afternoon, police said.

Annapolis District Judge Martha Rasin ordered Ms. Mitchell's bail to remain at \$25,000 at a bail review hearing yesterday afternoon, a spokeswoman said.

County police and Secret Service agents in the Baltimore office believe the ring acquires false identification cards and credit cards. Members stay in a major city for one day and make as many credit card purchases as possible, they said. They ship the goods to California and fly back home as a group, authorities believe.

Ms. Mitchell was arrested after nearly \$8,400 in computer equipment was charged at the Computer City store in Glen Burnie, police said.

When Secret Service Special Agent Jim Barnes questioned her, he learned of her alleged connection with the group, which flew out of Baltimore-Washington International Airport about one hour after Ms. Mitchell was apprehended, authorities said.

Dennis Lynch, a spokesman for the Secret Service office in Baltimore, would not comment on the size of the group or the extent of its operations, saying that would compromise the agency's investigation of the group's activities in other cities.

Mr. Lynch did say that the group did not charge goods at any other Baltimore-area store.

Ms. Mitchell was arrested about 4 p.m. at the Computer City store in the 500 block of Ordnance Road after a Discover credit card in the name of Gwen Reed was used to charge \$8,388 worth of computer equipment, police said.

Employee Lori Baker, 34, checked the card and learned that it had been reported stolen. She called police and stalled the woman until Northern District Officer Keith Light arrived, police said.

Officer Light asked the woman for identification. When she

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said she had none, he checked her purse, which contained three Discover cards with three account numbers. All of the cards had the name Gwen Reed on them.

The woman also had two California driver's licenses, one for Gwen Reed and the other for Felicia Michelle Mitchell, police said.

Officer Light called Discover's headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, and learned that the cards were counterfeit. The three account numbers were real and belonged to men in Chicago, Big Lake, Texas, and Lima, Ohio, a Discover spokeswoman said.

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