



THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 18, 2025
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Contact: Public Affairs Officer
Phone: (503) 727-1000
USAOR.PublicAffairs@usdoj.gov

Romanian Nationals Unlawfully Residing in the United States Indicted for Conspiring to Steal SNAP Benefits

PORTLAND, Ore.—Two Romanian nationals unlawfully residing in the United States made their initial appearances yesterday after being indicted by a federal grand jury for their role in a conspiracy to steal more than \$160,000 of benefits from low income and food insecure individuals and families.

Alexandru Telescu, 29, and Aramis Manolea, 35, have been charged in a 26-count indictment with conspiracy to defraud the United States, access device fraud, possession, production, and trafficking of device-making equipment, and aggravated identity theft.

“We are deeply grateful to our partners for their unwavering commitment to safeguarding the integrity of essential programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,” said Scott E. Bradford, U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon. “Those who steal these sacred funds will be held accountable, and we will ensure that these vital programs continue to serve the communities that rely on them.”

“This scheme effectively took food from the dinner tables of struggling American families,” said Carrie Nordyke, Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation’s (IRS-CI) Seattle Field Office. “We’re proud to help our law enforcement partners expose abuse of the SNAP Program and keep government assistance available for those who need it.”

“We thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Oregon, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Oregon Department of Human Services, and IRS-CI for their steadfast work on this impactful investigation,” said Shawn Dionida, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General (USDA OIG) Special Agent-in-Charge.

According to court documents, beginning in April 2025, Telescu and Manolea, along with others, conspired to use stolen Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) account information and PINs to fraudulently purchase SNAP-eligible items, like infant formula and energy drinks. The defendants, along with their co-conspirators, also conspired to possess and use electronic devices to steal EBT account information and PINs from point-of-sale terminals in Oregon and elsewhere. The conspiracy used the EBT benefits at grocery stores in Oregon, Washington, and California. The stolen goods were packaged in storage units and loaded into vans and trucks for shipment to California.

For example, from July 4, 2025, through October 13, 2025, Telescu and co-conspirators used a Sam's Club account in California to conduct approximately 231 fraudulent SNAP transactions using victims' EBT accounts totaling approximately \$102,000. From September 5, 2025, through September 9, 2025, Manolea and a co-conspirator used 10 separate EBT accounts in Oregon retail stores to steal approximately \$8,739 in SNAP funds. On September 23, 2025, Telescu and co-defendant Andy Perovici installed a skimming device on a retail point-of-sale terminal in Tigard, Oregon, with the intent to capture EBT card account data and customers' PINs.

Telescu and Manolea made their initial appearance in federal court yesterday before a U.S. Magistrate Judge. They were arraigned, pleaded not guilty, and ordered detained pending trial.

The USDA OIG and IRS-CI are investigating the case with assistance from the United States Marshals Service for the District of Oregon, Eastern District of California, and the Central District of California, and the Oregon Department of Human Services. Geoffrey A. Barrow and Nicholas D. Meyers, Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the District of Oregon, are prosecuting the case.

An indictment is only an accusation of a crime, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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