# The United States Attorney's Office

## Southern District of Florida

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# Press Release

### SEVEN MEMBERS OF ROMANIAN ORGANIZED CRIME GROUP INDICTED IN INTERNATIONAL WIRE FRAUD SCHEME

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Michael K. Fithen, Special Agent in Charge, United States Secret Service, and Al Lamberti, Sheriff, Broward County Sheriff's Office, announced today's Indictment, charging seven members of an organized crime group based in Romania with offenses arising from a wire fraud scheme. Named in the eleven-count Indictment are defendants **Laurentiu Adam, Flavius Corneliu Militaru, Horatiu Daniel Balanescu, Dragos Ioan Balanescu, Sorin Lebada, Cristian Florea,** and **Nicolae Gligor**. Adam, Militaru, Horatiu Balanescu, and Dragos Balanescu are believed to be in Romania. Their extradition will be sought. Lebada, Florea, and Gligor are in federal custody in Broward County.

According to the Indictment and an affidavit filed in the case, the seven defendants and other unnamed co-conspirators conspired to engage in a wire fraud scheme targeting individuals seeking to purchase goods and merchandise from internet auction websites. Co-conspirators outside the United States would post items for sale, such as boats, vehicle trailers, and jet-skis, on the internet and would instruct individuals who wanted to buy those items to wire-transfer the purchase money to a fictitious name. Co-conspirators inside the United States would receive text messages from their co-conspirators in Romania with instructions on how to retrieve the money and on how to distribute it after retrieval. Thereafter, co-conspirators inside the United States would go to the money-transfer service terminals, present false identification documents, and retrieve the proceeds of the fraud scheme.

For example, Counts 6 and 7 of the Indictment describe an alleged exchange of text messages between defendants Adam in Romania and Lebada in the United States, in which Adam instructed Lebada to assume the name of "Terry Bolduin" and to pick up wire-transferred purchase money from a victim identified as "J.T.P." Defendant Lebada is alleged to have sent a text message from Florida to defendant Adam in Romania indicating that the purchase money from "J.T.P." was retrieved. When Lebada was arrested after departing a Western Union terminal at a Wal-Mart in Cooper City, FL, he had a Finnish passport in the name of "Terry Bolduin" but bearing his photograph.

According to an affidavit filed in the case, numerous receipts from fraudulent wire transactions, totaling several hundred thousand dollars, were seized from the motel room in Deerfield Beach, FL, where defendants Lebada, Florea, and Gligor had been staying at the time of their arrest. In addition, thousands of dollars in cash were seized from Lebada, Florea, and Gligor. The Indictment seeks forfeiture of all fraud proceeds including nearly $170,000.

In April 2008, Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey announced the Law Enforcement Strategy to Combat International Organized Crime to address the growing threat to U.S. security and stability posed by international organized crime. The strategy was developed following an October 2007 International Organized Crime Threat Assessment. The strategy specifically reacts to the globalization of legal and illegal business, advances in technology, particularly the Internet, and the evolution of symbiotic relationships between criminals, public officials, and business leaders that have combined to create a new, less restrictive environment within which international organized criminals can operate. Ultimately, the strategy aims to create consensus among domestic law enforcement in identifying the most significant priority targets and then unified and concerted action among domestic and international law enforcement in significantly disrupting and dismantling those targets.

"This case demonstrates the importance of international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of world-wide criminal organizations that commit crimes using the internet. Through internet technology, criminal organizations are no longer limited by physical boundaries, and can defraud victims around the world. We will prosecute

internet crimes that victimize our residents," said United States Attorney R. Alexander Acosta.

Michael Fithen, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Secret Service, said, "The Secret Service Miami Field Office will continue to utilize our expertise and that of our law enforcement partners from the Miami Electronic Crimes Task Force and the South Florida Organized Financial Crimes Task Force to assist in these significant international investigations."

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the United States Secret Service, and the Broward County Sheriff's Office. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher J. Hunter.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov or on http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov.