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**For Immediate Release**

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# **Traveling Thieves who Targeted Senior Victims Sentenced for Elder Theft**

## ***Dozens of Similar Crimes Have Been Reported to Law Enforcement***

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) said today two thieves, known for traveling throughout San Diego County to find elderly victims to prey upon, have been sentenced to local custody and to prison after being convicted of robbery, attempted residential burglary and theft from an elderly person.

The defendants – Daniel Miclescu and Simona Paun – are a husband-and-wife team who targeted three victims last August and September, pretending to sell jewelry before forcefully stealing one victim’s Rolex watch and another victim’s purse containing \$850 in cash. The third victim was able to prevent the thieves from accessing her home by quickly slamming the door once the defendants tried to force their way in. She had rebuffed the sellers the previous day in a Mira Mesa parking lot, and they followed her home, unbeknownst to her.

“These type of traveling thieves have been prolific in San Diego County, around California and across the country for the past two years and often approach victims in parking lots at local shopping centers or within residential neighborhoods, in upscale rental vehicles,” DA Stephan said. “Let this prosecution and sentencing be an example to would-be thieves that we will not tolerate these organized criminal acts.”

The defendants are part of nationwide ring involving hundreds of suspects. In a typical case, the suspects contact a victim in a parking lot of a shopping center or while they are out for a walk in their neighborhood. The conversation begins with the suspects asking for directions or telling the victim they were robbed and need assistance. Many times, the suspects say they are from Dubai and need help getting back home. Once the victims begin talking to the suspects and letting their guard down, the suspects use distraction and sleight of hand techniques to steal necklaces, watches, rings, and cash. In some cases, when the suspect is unsuccessful, force is used to steal the jewelry.

The San Diego Police Department is committed to solving these crimes and holding the perpetrators accountable. In the past nine months, detectives have arrested 13 subjects in San



Diego and other counties in Southern California, and numerous more suspects are currently under investigation and arrests are pending.

“This is an excellent example of law enforcement partners working together to hold criminals accountable,” said Chief David Nisleit. “We will continue these efforts to protect our communities against these brazen crimes.”

Since the start of 2021, San Diego law enforcement have received more than 75 reports of similar thefts and attempted thefts involving dozens of suspects. Most of the crimes occur in shopping center parking lots and the series disproportionately targets the elderly and significant number of Asian victims in the Mira Mesa neighborhood and in National City.

To avoid being victimized, immediately walk away if approached by anyone offering jewelry. Remain in contact with other people or witnesses if possible and create distance between yourself and anyone offering jewelry, including their vehicles as suspects may attempt to grab jewelry and speed away. If contacted in a parking lot, ensure that you are not being followed when you drive away.

Please report aggressive parking lot jewelry sales to store employees or police.

Miclescu, who was sentenced to four years in state prison and Paun, who received one year of local jail plus probation, pleaded guilty on December 9. Deputy District Attorney Scott Pirrello handled this case.

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**About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office**

*The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*

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