

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **Cameroonian National Sentenced for Unemployment Insurance Benefits Fraud**

Friday, February 20, 2026

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland

**Greenbelt, Maryland** – A Cameroonian National, who committed crimes against the United States from abroad, received a federal prison term today, in connection with an unemployment insurance (UI) fraud scheme.

U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow sentenced Anais Thalia Ossele Massaba, 34, to 54 months in prison for conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft.

Kelly O. Hayes, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced the sentence with Inspector General Anthony P. D'Esposito, U.S. Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG), Special Agent in Charge Kareem A. Carter, Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), Washington, D.C. Field Office, and Special Agent in Charge Christopher Heck, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) – Maryland.

According to court documents, from June 2020 through September 2021, Massaba conspired with co-conspirators to defraud the Maryland Department of Labor (MD-DOL) and other state workforce agencies of more than \$1.7 million in UI benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Massaba and her co-conspirators transmitted and caused the transmission of wire communications, in interstate commerce, from the United Kingdom to Maryland. The co-conspirators conspired to submit and cause the submission of numerous UI claims using the stolen identities of United States citizens.

Co-conspirator 1 and Co-conspirator 2 were U.S. fugitives. Co-conspirator 1 was residing in the UK under a false identity after fleeing the United States in 2015. Massaba and Co-conspirator 2 were married and fled to the UK, in September 2019, to avoid arrest and prosecution.

The co-conspirators executed the sophisticated scheme while residing in the UK. Beginning in June 2020, Co-conspirator 1 organized a group of individuals in the U.S. and the UK to participate in the wide-ranging conspiracy to fraudulently obtain UI benefits from multiple state workforce agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Massaba and Co-conspirator 2 were part of the UK group responsible for filing false UI claims with the MD-DOL and other state workforce agencies.

While in the UK, Massaba used a computer to file fraudulent UI claims with the MD-DOL. Massaba and others used and controlled two anonymous email addresses, allowing her and the co-conspirators to create linked, disposable email addresses for the fraudulent UI applications. This allowed the conspirators to file numerous fraudulent UI claims and aggregate information in discrete accounts.

In total, Massaba submitted and caused the submission of at least 196 fraudulent UI claims to the MD-DOL using these anonymous email addresses, resulting in approximately \$1,708,256 in losses. The two email addresses and the UI claims that she filed represent only a small fraction of the fraudulent UI claims filed by the co-conspirators.

U.S. Attorney Hayes commended the DOL-OIG, IRS-CI, and HSI Maryland for their work in the investigation. Ms. Hayes also thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jared M. Beim and Bijon A. Mostoufi who are prosecuting the case.

The District of Maryland Strike Force is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud, including fraud relating to the CARES Act. Strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts that use prosecutor-led and data-analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>. Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

For more information about the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to report fraud, visit [justice.gov/usao-md](https://www.justice.gov/usao-md) and [justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach](https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach).

# # #

**Contact**

Kevin Nash

USAMD.Press@usdoj.gov

410-209-4946

*Updated February 20, 2026*