



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

Date: Oct. 1, 2015

Contact: \*CI-HQ-COMMUNICATIONSEDUCATION@ci.irs.gov  
IRS – Criminal Investigation

CI Release #: CI-2015-10-02-C

### **Alabama Woman Pleads Guilty for Involvement in Stolen Identity Tax Refund Fraud Ring**

A Phenix City, Alabama, resident pleaded guilty for her role in a stolen identity tax refund fraud (SIRF) conspiracy, Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciralo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney George L. Beck Jr. of the Middle District of Alabama announced today.

According to court documents, between Jan. 1, 2013, and Dec. 31, 2013, Benita Short conspired with others to defraud the United States by filing false federal income tax returns using stolen identities. Short obtained personal identifiable information, including names, social security numbers, addresses and dates of birth, without the individuals' authorization. A co-conspirator obtained the stolen personal identifiable information from an individual who had access to Alabama state databases and gave it to Short. This co-conspirator also obtained Electronic Filing Identification Numbers (EFINs) in the names of several tax preparation businesses and provided the EFINs to Short. Short then used the stolen identities and EFINs to electronically file 326 fraudulent tax returns, causing a tax loss of \$456,853. Short also caused fraudulent income tax refund checks to be cashed at several businesses in Alabama and Georgia.

Short additionally pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated identity theft. She faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and three years of supervised release for the conspiracy charge and a statutory mandatory sentence of two years in prison and one year of supervised release for the aggravated identity theft charge. Short must serve the two-year sentence for aggravated identity theft in addition to whatever sentence the court imposes for the conspiracy charge. Both charges carry a statutory maximum fine of \$250,000.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciralo and U.S. Attorney Beck commended special agents of Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, who investigated the case, and Trial Attorneys Michael C. Boteler and Michael P. Hatzimichalis of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Ross of the Middle District of Alabama, who are prosecuting the case.

Additional information about the Tax Division and its enforcement efforts may be found on the division's website.

###