



PRESS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Chief Richard Weber

Date: Nov. 23, 2015

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

CI Release #: CI-2015-11-23-A

Alabama Woman Sentenced for Role in \$20 Million Stolen Identity Tax Fraud Ring

Conspired With Others to File False Tax Returns Using Stolen Names and Social Security Numbers

A Phenix City, Alabama woman was sentenced today to serve more than seven years in prison for her role in a stolen identity refund fraud (SIRF) conspiracy, Acting Assistant Attorney General Caroline D. Ciraolo of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney George L. Beck, Jr. of the Middle District of Alabama announced today.

Talashia Hinton aka LayLay and LaLa, 24, was sentenced to 94 months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$7,173,704. According to court documents and evidence presented at the sentencing hearing, Hinton participated in a large-scale SIRF scheme in which participants filed more than 8,000 false tax returns for 2012 and 2013 fraudulently claiming more than \$20 million in federal income tax refunds from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Hinton worked with Keshia Lanier, who supplied her with IRS Electronic Filing Identification Numbers (EFINs) in the names of sham tax preparation businesses and stolen personal information, including names and social security numbers. Hinton used the EFINs and stolen personal information to prepare and file false income tax returns that fraudulently claimed tax refunds. At the direction of Lanier, Hinton also obtained stolen identities from Tamika Floyd, who stole names from a databases maintained by the state of Alabama. Hinton used some of those names to file false returns, emailed some of the names to Lanier and delivered other names to another co-conspirator, Tracy Mitchell and her family, who used the names to file false returns. Hinton then directed the IRS to pay the refunds by issuing U.S. Treasury checks and direct deposits onto prepaid debit cards.

Hinton pleaded guilty in August to conspiracy to defraud the government with respect to claims and aggravated identity theft. Lanier, Mitchell and Floyd also previously pleaded guilty for their roles in the SIRF scheme. In May, Tamika Floyd was sentenced to 87 months in prison; in August, Tracy Mitchell was sentenced to 159 months in prison and in September, Lanier was sentenced to 180 months in prison.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Ciraolo and U.S. Attorney Beck commended special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation, who investigated the case, and Trial Attorneys Michael C. Boteler and Gregory P. Bailey of the Tax Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan Ross of the Middle District of Alabama, who prosecuted the case.

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