



NEWS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation
Los Angeles Field Office
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Former Van Nuys Income Tax Preparer Sentenced to 18 Months in Federal Prison for Defrauding the IRS

LOS ANGELES – A former Van Nuys income tax preparer was sentenced this morning by United States District Judge R. Gary Klausner to 18 months imprisonment after pleading guilty to charges that he filed dozens of false tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service.

Rene R. Lopez, 61,-- former operator of Lopez & Associates Business Consultants in Van Nuys -- was further ordered by Judge Klausner to pay restitution of \$114,467 to the IRS.

In April, Lopez pleaded guilty to count nine of the indictment charging him with presenting a false claim to the IRS. The specific count to which Lopez pleaded guilty relates to the filing of a fraudulent 2000 income tax return claiming a refund of \$2,765.

According to documents filed with the court, from 1998 through 2001, Lopez prepared and filed at least 85 fraudulent income tax returns with the IRS claiming \$130,797 in false income tax refunds. Lopez submitted these false returns in the names of his clients without their knowledge, and kept the fraudulent refund amounts for himself. In order to facilitate this deception, Lopez provided his clients with dummy returns that made it appear as if their tax liabilities had been correctly reported to the IRS. After a refund check was issued by the Treasury Department based on the second fraudulent return, Lopez would issue his client a cashier's check for the correct amount of their federal income tax refund, and keep the larger fraudulent refund check for himself.

Lopez was indicted by a federal grand jury in April of 2003. Following his arrest, arraignment, and release on bond, Lopez fled the country for Colombia rather than accept responsibility for his actions. After ten years outside of the country,

Lopez returned to the United States and surrendered to IRS authorities in February.

The investigation and prosecution of Lopez was conducted by IRS Criminal Investigation's Los Angeles Field Office, in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.

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