



NEWS RELEASE

Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation
Los Angeles Field Office
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Fifth Defendant Pleads Guilty to Central and Southern California Tax Refund Conspiracy Scheme that Fraudulently Sought over \$1.5 Million in Refunds

Los Angeles – A man pleaded guilty this morning to conspiring to use stolen identities to file fraudulent tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service that sought more than \$1.5 million in false tax refunds.

Wesley Wade Hunter, 46, was most recently incarcerated at the Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, California, and is now in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Hunter, who also goes by “Godfather”, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States by obtaining the payment of false claims, namely tax refunds.

Hunter is the fifth of six defendants to plead guilty in this scheme, which spanned both San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles counties. In January of 2015, a federal grand jury returned a 17-count indictment charging Hunter and five others with identity theft and the tax refund conspiracy scheme. The others named in the indictment are:

- Latasha Coates, 35, of Los Angeles, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced on June 2;
- Crystal Coleman, 58, of Los Angeles, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced on May 26;
- Guadalupe Flores, 33, of Los Angeles, pleaded guilty to theft of public money and is scheduled to be sentenced on June 6;

- Lisa Tavra, 43, of Las Vegas, Nevada, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and is scheduled to be sentenced on June 9; and
- Lourdes Brown, 47, of Modesto, is scheduled to begin trial on July 12.

According to documents filed with the court, beginning on an unknown date and continuing until May of 2012, Hunter filed or assisted in the filing of fraudulent tax returns seeking refunds using the identities of over 250 individuals. Hunter and the other co-conspirators would obtain the names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, and other personal identification information of individuals without their knowledge and consent. Hunter and others would knowingly file false federal income tax returns that claimed fraudulent tax refund payments based upon fraudulent wage and withholding amounts under their own names and under the names and Social Security numbers of the identity theft victims. The co-conspirators then cashed the fraudulently obtained refund checks that were issued based upon the fraudulent returns filed with the IRS. In all, Hunter's conduct resulted in an intended loss of more than \$1.5 million and an actual loss of approximately \$104,283 to the United States government.

When sentenced by United States District Judge George H. Wu on June 20, 2016, Hunter faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a fine of \$2,000,000.

This investigation was conducted by IRS Criminal Investigation in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.

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