



PRESS RELEASE

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

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Three People Found Guilty of Taking Part in Scheme That Used Stolen Identifying Information to Fraudulently Seek Millions in Tax Refunds

Three people were found guilty today by a jury in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia of federal charges for participating in a scheme to file false federal income tax returns in order to fraudulently obtain tax refunds to which they were not entitled, announced Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart M. Goldberg of the Justice Department's Tax Division; U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips for the District of Columbia, Acting Special Agent in Charge Thomas J. Holloman of the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI) Washington D.C. Field Office; Inspector in Charge Joseph Cronin of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Washington Division; and Assistant Inspector General for Investigations John L. Phillips of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Approximately two dozen other participants in this scheme have pleaded guilty to charges in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. According to court documents, the overall case involves the filing of at least 12,000 fraudulent federal income tax returns that sought refunds of at least \$20 million.

The jury's verdicts were returned against Tony Bryant, 55, of Clinton, Maryland; his son, Brian Bryant, 29, also of Clinton, and Tarkara Cooper, 34, of Washington, D.C.

All three defendants were found guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit theft of government funds and to defraud the United States. Tony Bryant was found guilty of five counts each of theft of public money and aggravated identity theft. Brian Bryant also was found guilty of three counts of theft of public money and two counts of aggravated identify theft. Tarkara Cooper also was found guilty of five counts of theft of public money. Judge Rosemary M. Collyer scheduled sentencing for Tony Bryant and Brian Bryant for April 28. She set a sentencing date of May 26 for Tarkara Cooper.

According to the government's evidence, members of the conspiracy participated in a massive and sophisticated stolen identity refund fraud scheme that involved an extensive network of more than 130 people, many of whom were receiving public assistance. The conspirators fraudulently claimed refunds for tax years 2005 through 2012, often in the names of people whose identities had been stolen, including the elderly, people in assisted living facilities, drug addicts and incarcerated prisoners. Returns were also filed in the names of, and refunds were issued to, willing participants in the scheme. The returns filed listed more than 400 "taxpayer" addresses located in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.

The participants played various roles in the scheme: stealing identifying information; allowing their personal identifying information to be used; creating and mailing fraudulent federal tax returns; allowing their addresses to be used for receipt of the refund checks; cashing the refund checks; providing bank accounts into which the refund checks were deposited and forging endorsements of identity theft victims

on the refund checks. The false returns typically reported inflated or fictitious income from a sole proprietorship and claimed phony dependents to generate an Earned Income Tax Credit, a refundable federal income tax credit for working families with low to moderate incomes.

According to the government's evidence, the Bryants and Cooper took part in the conspiracy from approximately April 2010 through June 2012. Cooper agreed to have her residence used for the delivery of tax refund checks, and received payment from a co-conspirator when she provided the tax refund checks to him. The Bryants used bank accounts under their control for the deposit of tax refund checks, which were fraudulently obtained by others. According to the evidence at trial, the Bryants and Cooper had roles in refund claims fraudulently seeking \$4,959,310; these claims led to the negotiation of refund checks totaling \$2,285,717, representing the actual losses to the U.S. Treasury.

In announcing the verdicts, Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Goldberg, U.S. Attorney Phillips, Acting Special Agent in Charge Holloman, Inspector in Charge Cronin and Assistant Inspector General Phillips commended special agents, who conducted the investigation and acknowledged the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office of the District of Columbia, including former Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri L. Schornstein and Paralegal Specialists Aisha Keys, Donna Galindo, Julie Dailey, and Jessica Mundi. They also expressed appreciation for the work of Trial Attorneys Jeffrey B. Bender, Thomas F. Koelbl, and Jessica Moran of the Tax Division, who also worked on the case.

Finally, they commended the work of Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ellen Chubin Epstein and Michelle Bradford of the District of Columbia's Fraud and Public Corruption Section and Trial Attorney Kimberly G. Ang of the Tax Division, who prosecuted the case.

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