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involved thousands of stolen identities that were used to submit millions of dollars in fraudulent tax refund claims.

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The FBI, Secret Service and local police are cracking down on tax refund frauds and ID thefts related to taxes.

In Miami on Wednesday, 14 defendants in six separate cases were charged for taking part in scams that involved thousands of stolen identities that were used to submit millions of dollars in fraudulent tax refund claims. The FBI said the cases reaffirm the joint federal and local commitment, first announced in October 2012, to crack down on stolen identity refund fraud (SIRF) and its perpetrators.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, Florida had the highest rate of identity theft in the United States in 2011. Florida's rate of 178 complaints per 100,000 residents, the highest in the United States, is dwarfed by the Miami rate of 324.1 complaints per 100,000 residents.

A September 2012 report by the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) determined that Florida has the highest rate of stolen identity refund fraud in the United States. In the city of Miami, the per capita number of false returns based on identity theft was 46 times the national average, and its per capita SIRF fraud dollar value was more than 70 times the national average.

"Identity theft tax refund fraud has spread through South Florida like a virus," said U.S. Attorney Wifredo A. Ferrer. Since the creation of the strike force, the U.S. Attorney's Office has charged 113 defendants responsible for approximately \$92 million in stolen identity refund fraud. "We will continue to crack down on identity

thieves who are lining their pockets with our tax dollars by stealing the personal

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continue to work with the U.S. Attorneys Office, Internal Revenue Service, and our law enforcement partners in the south Florida region to combat this crime that is impacting the lives of so many innocent people. Together, we will strive to identify offenders but, most importantly, safeguard our communities against this harsh violation that is compromising the financial status of so many hard-working, honest efforts.”

Using stolen identities to fraudulently claim income tax refunds is a growing epidemic in Florida. In the city of Miami alone, the per capita number of false returns from identity theft was 46 times the national average, said Michael B. Steinbach, Acting Special Agent in Charge of FBI Miami. The FBI is actively targeting these fraudsters who seek illicit gains by victimizing hard-working taxpayers.

The cases announced today include:

1. United States v. Nael Dawud Sammour

Defendant Nael Dawud Sammour was indicted on eight counts of theft of public money, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 641, and two counts of aggravated identity theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1028A, for his role in attempting to negotiate 75 fraudulently obtained U.S. Treasury tax refund checks totaling \$750,369.45. According to the charges, unknown individuals used stolen identification information, including the names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers of unsuspecting taxpayers, to fraudulently apply for and receive tax refunds to which they were not entitled. Thereafter, defendant Sammour obtained many of these fraudulently obtained U.S. Treasury tax refund checks and transferred these checks, along with counterfeit drivers licenses and Social Security cards, to undercover IRS agents posing as check

cashers. When the defendant was arrested, law enforcement located and seized

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one count of conspiracy to file false claims, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 286; three counts of identity theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1028; three counts of theft of public money, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 641; and three counts of aggravated identity theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1028A.

According to the indictment, defendant Major was a scheduler at the Boca Raton Regional Hospital in Boca Raton, Florida. As a scheduler, Major had access to the personal identification information of Boca Raton Regional Hospital patients, including their names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers. In exchange for the promise of future payments, Major provided Wright with stolen personal identifying information of numerous Boca Raton Regional Hospital patients. After receiving the stolen identification information, Wright used the information to electronically file federal income tax returns in the victims names and to claim tax refunds to which she was not entitled. Wright directed the IRS to direct deposit the refunds onto pre-paid reloadable debit cards that were already in her possession. Thereafter, Wright would use the debit cards to make withdrawals at local ATMs or would use the debit cards to make purchases at various local businesses. Once Wright cashed out the fraudulently obtained refund debit cards, she split the proceeds with Major. In total, 57 returns were identified as having been fraudulently filed, seeking \$306,720 in federal tax refunds.

3. United States v. Christopher and Jeffrey Rosier

Defendant Christopher Rosier was indicted on four counts of identity theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1028; one count of access device fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1029; one count of aggravated identity theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 1028A; and one count of conspiracy to file false claims, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 286. Codefendant Jeffrey Rosier was indicted on one count of conspiracy to file false claims, in violation of 18 U.S.C. 286.

According to the indictment, defendant Christopher Rosier obtained personal

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Christopher Rosier, in total, defendants Rosier attempted \$80,710 in fraudulent tax refunds, yet was only successfully in obtaining \$36,732 in unlawful tax dollars. Additionally, law enforcement seized \$8,660 in U.S. currency, as well as a laptop computer and a 2007 Infiniti G35 from the defendants.

4. United States v. Jahed Movlayazdanpahi

Defendant Jahed Movlayazdanpahi, 29, of Miramar, was charged in a three-count indictment for his participation in an identity theft tax refund scheme. According to the indictment, the defendant received stolen tax refunds to which he was not entitled. The indictment charges the defendant with theft of public money and property. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John R. Byrne.

5. United States v. Fednol Pierre and Jeanson Pata

Two defendants were charged in 13-count indictment for their participation in an identity theft tax refund scheme. Charged in the indictment were Fednol Pierre, 34, of Miami, and Jeanson Pata, 31, of West Palm Beach. The indictment charges Pierre with theft of government money and aggravated identity theft. It also charges Pata with theft of government money or property and false statement to a federal agency. According to the indictment, Pierre used stolen personal identification information to steal six tax refund payments, totaling \$52,535.87. The indictment further alleges that Pata participated in the theft of two of these payments, totaling \$14,078, and made a false statement to the United States Secret Service during the investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Benjamin Coats.

6. United States v. Douglas Michael Young, et al.

Last week, five defendants pled guilty in U.S. v. Douglas Michael Young, et al., Case. No. 12-CR-20767, for their involvement in a tax fraud conspiracy. On January 29, 2013, defendants Jeffrey Andre Young, Jr., 31, of Miami, and Joseph Bshara, 27, of

Miami Shores, each pled guilty to one count of theft of government property and one

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a/k/a Nicole Pierre, a/k/a Nicole Pierre Smith, 42, both of Miramar, each pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to steal government property, one count of theft of government property, and one count of aggravated identity theft. Defendant Douglas Michael Young and his wife, Nicole Young, owned and operated two tax preparation companies, Supreme Tax and Young Professional Services Inc. The Youngs would obtain identification information from unknowing victims and use their identification information to file fraudulent tax refund claims. The Youngs charged the unknowing victims a fee for their purported tax preparation service, which would be deducted from their refund check. The Youngs would deposit the fees into bank accounts they controlled. The remainder of the refunds would be converted into personal checks that would be deposited into bank accounts controlled by co-defendants Ernest V. Charles, Joseph Bshara, and Siham Benabdallah. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kurt Lunkenheimer.

An indictment is only an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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