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two years -- but not in salary for his patrol duties, authorities say.

Mar. 09, 2013

Malinsky Bazile, a young Miami police officer, pocketed about \$140,000 over the past two years — but not in salary for his patrol duties, authorities say.

While on duty, Bazile ran the names of more than 1,000 people in the state driver's license database, according to a criminal complaint. Then he took their personal information and filed bogus federal income-tax returns, all to score stolen refunds.

Bazile and fellow officer Vital Frederick, separately accused of tapping into the same database, were both arrested Thursday in the first-ever federal prosecution of identity theft and tax-refund fraud involving South Florida law enforcement.

Bazile, 28, of Miramar, and Frederick, 26, of North Miami, who both joined the force in 2008, were arrested by Miami police internal affairs detectives and FBI agents. The officers had their first appearances in Miami federal court Thursday, with bond hearings and arraignments set for next week.

In an unrelated prosecution, federal agents also arrested a state corrections officer Thursday on the same offenses.

The Miami cop arrests were but the latest in a string of city officer take-downs, part of a joint corruption investigation into the department. The main focus: several officers accused of providing protection for a sports-gambling ring or a check-cashing store, both in Liberty City.

Frederick was also charged with extortion in connection with the check-cashing store racket.

But the allegations of police involvement in the growing wave of ID- and tax-refund

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Miami Police Chief Manuel Orosa could not be reached for comment.

Bazile and Frederick are among 11 Miami police officers relieved of duty in recent months who face criminal charges or the loss of their jobs in connection with the corruption investigation, which focused on the North District station in Liberty City.

In the unrelated case, Bernard Beliard, 27, of Miami, a state corrections officer since 2005, was arrested and accused of illegally tapping into an inmate database at the South Florida Reception Center in South Miami-Dade County, authorities say. He was fired Thursday.

All three law officers were charged in separate criminal complaints filed by prosecutors Robin Waugh and Michael Berger.

In the past year, including Thursday's cases, the U.S. attorney's office has charged about 130 defendants accused of an estimated \$140 million in tax-refund fraud. Convictions have resulted in increasingly higher sentences: On Thursday, Jonathan Torres-Bonilla, 36, of Hollywood, convicted of fleecing \$117,000 in tax refunds from the federal government, was slapped with 16 years in prison — the stiffest penalty so far in a South Florida ID-theft, tax-fraud case.

The U.S. government loses billions of dollars a year to refund schemes affecting millions of American taxpayers, according to the Treasury Department. South Florida is considered among the capitals of this type of fraud.

The joint FBI-Miami police corruption investigation was launched a year ago when the Liberty City sports gambling ring was broken up.

Last month, Miami officer Nathaniel Dauphin pleaded guilty to an extortion charge for providing protection for the illegal betting business.

Dauphin, 41, admitted he received between \$4,000 and \$5,000 from the owner of the

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Also ensnared in that probe: Frederick.

But among the latest corruption cases, Bazile's stands out for its sheer size, authorities say.

According to a criminal complaint, FBI and Miami police internal affairs detectives installed a tracking device on Bazile's work-issued laptop in the past year after they uncovered that he had run more than 1,000 "suspicious" searches of people's names in the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles database.

Investigators found that Bazile supplied some of those names, with dates of birth and Social Security numbers, to his step-brother Jean Baptiste Charles, to submit false tax returns to the Internal Revenue Service. Charles pleaded guilty last month and faces sentencing in April.

Investigators soon discovered that Bazile also obtained personal information for hundreds of women with the same last names, such as Rogers, Gonzalez, Martinez, Lopez and Sanders, who were between 57 and 61, according to the criminal complaint.

Bazile filed nearly identical tax returns — with fabricated income information — in their names, claiming that each had earned unemployment compensation of \$6,500, the complaint said. He sought refunds up to \$1,700 each.

Investigators also obtained numerous ATM photos of Bazile last summer as he withdrew thousands of dollars on debit cards loaded with the refunds, which were issued by the IRS.

When investigators confronted Bazile in October, he signed a written confession, admitting he used the state database, withdrew money from the ATM machines on

the debit cards, and made between \$130,000 and \$140,000 in 2011-2012 from the

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He added that the FBI's Miami area corruption task force was established in 2009 to "ensure these high standards of integrity are met and maintained."

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