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A former Wells Fargo Bank employee in Anchorage admitted in federal court Thursday that she helped members of an identity theft and tax fraud ring open illegitimate bank accounts and cash fraudulent checks.

Hilda Josephine Hernandez-McMullen, 47, pleaded guilty to seven felony counts of bank fraud and one count of passing a forged U.S. Treasury check, according to court records.

Federal agents investigating cocaine dealers in Anchorage uncovered a tax fraud operation in which members of the conspiracy used stolen personal information from residents of Puerto Rico to apply for about \$25 million in federal tax refunds, prosecutors said.

To cash the checks, the 10 residents of Mexico and the Dominican Republic charged in the case — seven of whom were living in the United States illegally — got help from Hernandez-McMullen, according to the prosecutors and court documents.

As a personal banker at Wells Fargo from December 2008 to September 2010, Hernandez-McMullen “opened several bank accounts for defendants also charged in the scheme, (she) opened the accounts despite knowing that the names and identifying information used to open them were false,” the U.S. Attorney’s Office said in a written statement Friday.

“Hernandez-McMullen admitted to assisting in the fraudulent negotiation of checks totaling \$37,978.15,” the statement says. “She further admitted that she negotiated

these checks despite the fact that they were issued to people who were not at the

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