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TAXES

Feds Charge 7 with \$110 Million Tax Refund ID Theft Scheme

Charged with a conspiracy to claim \$111 million in tax refunds using the stolen identities of accountants and taxpayers by filing at least 371 false tax returns.

Mar. 14, 2023



- Allegations include stealing identities of accountants, tax preparers, and taxpayers.

On March 7, a federal grand jury in Austin, Texas, returned an indictment charging seven individuals with conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and other crimes arising out of their scheme to defraud the IRS using stolen identities. The indictment was unsealed on March 13, 2023.

According to the indictment, from 2018 through 2021, Abraham Yusuff, of Round Rock, Meghan Inyang, of San Antonio, Christopher Eduardo, of Round Rock, Christian Mathurin, of Nashville, Tennessee, Dillon Anozie, of San Antonio, Babajide Ogunbanjo, of Austin, and Aydin Mammadov, of Houston, engaged in a conspiracy to claim fraudulent tax refunds using the stolen identities of accountants and taxpayers by filing at least 371 false tax returns claiming over \$111 million in refunds from the IRS.

Yusuff allegedly recruited and directed Eduardo, Mathurin, Anozie, Ogunbanjo and Mammadov to provide addresses to him that could be used in the scheme. Yusuff and others then allegedly registered with the IRS, posing as authorized agents of multiple taxpayers using stolen information relating to the taxpayers and their real tax preparers. The conspirators then allegedly directed the IRS to change the addresses on file for the taxpayers and to send their tax information, including account transcripts and wage records, to the addresses controlled by the conspirators. The conspirators then allegedly used this information to electronically file tax returns claiming fraudulent refunds and directed the IRS to split the refunds among several prepaid debit cards. Prior to issuing tax refunds to some taxpayers, the IRS allegedly sent verification letters to the addresses controlled by the defendants, and the defendants and others, pretending to be the taxpayers, instructed the IRS to release the refunds.

The indictment also charges that Yusuff, Inyang, Eduardo, Anozie, Ogunbanjo and Mammadov obtained the prepaid debit cards that were to be used to receive the fraudulent refunds and that once the refunds were deposited onto the prepaid debit cards, they laundered the funds by purchasing, among other things, money orders from local stores in amounts low enough to avoid reporting thresholds. Yusuff and others also allegedly used the prepaid debit cards and money orders to purchase designer clothing, home renovation materials and used cars at auction. The indictment alleges that all defendants kept or received money orders purchased with the fraudulent refunds as their share of the illegal proceeds.

The indictment charges each defendant with varying crimes, including mail and wire fraud, conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud, aggravated identity theft,

money laundering and access device fraud. If convicted, they face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for the mail and wire fraud and the conspiracy of said fraud, 20 years for money laundering, 10 years for access device fraud, and a mandatory sentence of two years for aggravated identity theft. In addition to any term of imprisonment, each of the defendants also faces a period of supervised release, monetary penalties, restitution and forfeiture. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart Goldberg of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Jaime Esparza for the Western District of Texas made the announcement.

The IRS–Criminal Investigation and the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration are investigating the case.

Assistant Chief Michael Boteler and Trial Attorneys Mitchell T. Galloway and Mary Frances Richardson of the Justice Department's Tax Division are prosecuting the case.

An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

— Source: U.S. Department of Justice.

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