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NEWS



Detroit Man Sentenced For Wire Fraud And Identity Theft Fraudulent Tax Returns Filed For Deceased Individuals

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2014

A Detroit man was sentenced to prison for wire fraud and identity theft, U.S. Attorney Barbara L. McQuade announced today.

McQuade was joined in the announcement by IRS Criminal Investigation Acting Special Agent in Charge Carolyn Weber.

Willie Watkins, III, was sentenced to 30 months in prison to be followed by a three-year term of supervised release. The sentence was imposed by U.S. District Judge Avern Cohn. In addition, Judge Cohn ordered Watkins to pay restitution to the Internal Revenue Service of \$410,949.

In October of 2013, Watkins pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud and one count of use of false identification. According to court records, Watkins used the names and Social Security numbers of recently deceased individuals who had passed away between September 1 and November 30, 2010 throughout the United States. Watkins participated in the filing of several hundred fraudulent 2010 income tax returns of dead individuals. These income tax returns generated substantial claims for refunds that were deposited into different bank accounts which he controlled. Watkins disbursed the proceeds from the fraudulently obtained refunds.

"Watkins' actions are particularly reprehensible because he used the identities of the recently deceased. The stolen identities could have belonged to loved ones related to any one of us," said Carolyn Weber, Acting Special Agent in Charge for IRS Criminal Investigation. "The IRS has zero tolerance for this type of deplorable behavior."

The investigation of this case was conducted by special agents of the IRS Criminal Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Ross MacKenzie and Department of Justice Tax Division Trial Attorney Ken Vert.

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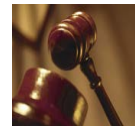
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