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MAN SENTENCED TO 37 MONTHS IN TAX REFUND SCHEME

FRESNO -- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge (SAC), Roger L. Wirth announced today that JOSE LUIS TORRES RAMOS, 38, of Terra Bella, was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Anthony W. Ishii in Fresno in connection with an illegal tax refund scheme. RAMOS was sentenced to 37 months in custody, to be followed by a three-year term of supervised release, and an assessment of \$100. RAMOS was also ordered to pay \$123,766 in restitution and agreed to forfeit his residence in Terra Bella, California. In sentencing RAMOS, Judge Ishii determined that RAMOS' conduct, as described below, involved "sophisticated means" pursuant to the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

This case was the result of an investigation by special agents with the Criminal Investigation unit of the IRS.

RAMOS admitted that as part of the conspiracy to defraud the IRS, he had false tax returns and false Forms W-2 prepared by co-defendant Arjelia Hernandez. The Forms W-2 each included a false employer, fictitious earnings and fictitious tax withholdings resulting in the amount of tax refund fraudulently claimed on the tax return. RAMOS also admitted to opening or having access to numerous post office boxes in Ducor, Reedley, Richgrove, Strathmore, Weldon, and Terra Bella, California, which he used to receive the false refund checks. RAMOS admitted to knowing that the tax refund checks that were mailed to those post office boxes were obtained with false tax returns prepared by him or someone else. RAMOS knew that all of these refund checks were made out to fictitious workers who had not worked in the United States, who had no federal income tax withholdings, and who were not entitled to any tax refunds from the United States. RAMOS also knew that the claims resulting in the tax refund checks were false, fictitious, and fraudulent.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Sheila K. Oberto who prosecuted the case, the case was part of a crackdown by the IRS on numerous tax refund schemes operating in the Central Valley. The schemes consisted of individuals who submitted false 1040 Individual Income Tax Returns to the IRS in order to receive false refund checks. To date, 25 people have entered guilty pleas in connection with the illegal tax refund scheme.

According to SAC Roger Wirth, "We view these schemes as organized tax evasion and it

is a top priority for us to stop them. The IRS will continue to work with the United States Attorney's Office to combat false tax return schemes such as this."

"The United States Attorney's Office is pleased to have joined with the IRS to target this wide-scale fraud. Our vigorous prosecution efforts should serve as notice to others who would attempt to engage in false tax returns schemes," stated United States Attorney Scott.

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