



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**June 27, 2003**

**EL PASO WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO  
CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD THE GOVERNMENT**

*(El Paso, Texas)* United States Attorney Johnny Sutton, Special Agent in Charge Dan Parfitt of the Office of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, Special Agent in Charge Enrique Fasci of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation and Special Agent in Charge Hardrick Crawford of the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced today the guilty plea of 35-year-old **NORMA PATRICIA BANUELAS** on charges of conspiracy to defraud the Government with respect to claims and conspiracy to falsely assume the identity of an employee of the United States.

Banuelas admitted that between 1997 and 2000, she and others conspired together to defraud the Government by preparing and filing fraudulent and false income tax returns seeking refunds totaling more than \$130,000. The factual basis in this case states that in the scheme, Banuelas would either: 1) fabricate W-2 forms including wage and withholding figures for employers for whom the clients never worked; 2) retype the W-2 forms to increase the wages and withholding amounts to maximize the amount of refund due; or, 3) prepare false Schedules C, claiming income and false expenses in order to generate a refund for clients. Banuelas typically charged clients \$1,000 for her services.

Over the past several years, customers believed Banuelas and her former husband were former IRS employees and as such were lured into hiring the Banuelas' to prepare their federal income tax returns. Some of the customers also believed they were paying the Banuelas' protection money to keep them out of trouble with the IRS. Banuelas nor her ex-husband were ever employees of the IRS. As a result of their scheme, authorities estimate that the Banuelas' collected over \$100,000 in cash and non-monetary compensation.

"Falsely impersonating a Government official undermines the public's trust and the federal Government's ability to effectively enforce the laws of this country," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

"The IRS considers the prosecution of unscrupulous tax preparers a high priority in maintaining the integrity of the U.S. tax system," stated Enrique Fasci, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation.

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Banuelas remains in custody pending formal sentencing. She faces up to ten years in federal prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine on the conspiracy to defraud the government charge and up to five years in federal prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine on the impersonating an IRS employee charge.

This case is being investigated by the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Office of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration and Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Margaret Leachman is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

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