



The United States Attorney's Office

Central District of California



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HAWTHORNE WOMAN CHARGED WITH STEALING HUNDREDS OF IDENTITIES OF DEAD PEOPLE TO FILE BOGUS TAX RETURNS THAT SOUGHT MORE THAN \$1 MILLION IN REFUNDS

A Southern California woman was charged this afternoon in a federal criminal complaint that alleges she stole the identities of hundreds of deceased people and used their personal information to file fraudulent federal tax returns that sought more than \$1 million in refunds.

Uzeegoa Makeba Sayles, 39, of Hawthorne, allegedly filed more than 200 fraudulent tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service. According to the affidavit in support of the complaint, during a six-year period, Sayles fraudulently sought \$1,070,308 in refunds, which resulted in the United States government actually paying \$603,971.66.

The scheme was uncovered when the IRS determined that numerous tax returns, purportedly submitted by unrelated individuals, requested that refunds be deposited into a small number of bank accounts. When IRS employees contacted the employers listed on the Forms W-2 submitted with those fraudulent returns, they determined that the employers did not actually issue those Forms W-2. When special agents with IRS-Criminal Investigation Division obtained bank records related to the bank accounts, they determined they were held by Sayles and her family members, according to the affidavit, which goes on to say that agents found Sayles' fingerprints on many of the fraudulent returns.

The IRS determined that virtually all of the people "filing" the fraudulent returns were deceased. The IRS also determined that many of the bogus returns claimed deductions for minor dependents who were also deceased.

On December 14, 2006, IRS-CID agents interviewed Sayles. As described in the affidavit, during the interview, Sayles told agents that she had prepared and submitted the fraudulent federal income tax returns, using personal identifying information on deceased individuals that she had located on the Internet.

Sayles is charged in the criminal complaint with three counts of filing a false claim against the United States. Those three charges carry a maximum statutory penalty 15 years in prison. Sayles is expected to make her first court appearance May 3 in United States District Court in Los Angeles.

A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in court.