

Press Release

OPERATORS OF CHECK CASHING STORE CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY IN CONNECTION WITH IRS TAX REFUND CHECK CASHING SCHEME

January 23, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wifredo A. Ferrer, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Vance Luce, Acting Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Secret Service, Miami Field Office, Steven Miller, IRS Deputy Commissioner for Services and Enforcement, and Jose A. Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CI), announce the filing of a criminal Information charging defendants **Wilson Lau**, 75, and his wife, **Kate Yuee Lau**, 54, both of Coral Springs, FL, for their participation in a check cashing scheme involving more than \$5 million in fraudulently obtained tax refund checks and tax refund anticipation loan checks.

U.S. Attorney Wifredo A. Ferrer stated, "It is time for tax refund scammers to realize that we will not allow them to steal taxpayers' hard-earned money. Today's charges are just the beginning. We now join forces with the IRS and Secret Service to combat tax refund fraud and identity theft. To this end, we will make the investigation and prosecution of these cases a top priority."

"The IRS is aggressively pursuing those who steal others' identities in order to file false returns," said Steven Miller, IRS Deputy Commissioner for Services and Enforcement. "Our cooperative work with the U.S. Attorney's Office will help protect taxpayers from being victimized by identity theft. The IRS is taking additional steps this tax season to further prevent, detect and resolve identity theft cases as soon as possible."

IRS-CI Special Agent in Charge José A. Gonzalez stated, "We do recognize the impact this type of crime has on the American public and therefore I will continue to increase my resources, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney, to investigate and bring to justice those groups of individuals who willingly utilize stolen identities to defraud the government. Make no mistake, the filing of a false claims and any financial transaction in furtherance of this crime will be investigated. Together with our law enforcement partners, we will aggressively investigate identity thieves and their accomplices and will hold them accountable for their actions."

The Information charges both defendants with one count of conspiracy, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §371. In addition, Wilson Lau is individually charged with one count of aggravated identity theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1028A. If convicted on the conspiracy charge, the defendants face a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of up to five years in prison. If convicted on identity theft charge, defendant Wilson Lau faces an additional two years in prison consecutive to any sentence imposed on the conspiracy charge. The Information also contains a forfeiture allegation, which seeks, among other things, a money judgment against both defendants in the amount of \$5,262,297.

The Information alleges that Wilson Lau was the operator of a check cashing store operating under the name American Quick Cash Depot in Oakland Park, FL, where his wife Kate Yuee Lau also worked. According to the Information, from January 2009 until approximately June 2011, the defendants conspired to buy, sell and receive U.S. Treasury checks bearing forged endorsements and to receive and conceal U.S. Treasury tax refund checks and tax refund anticipation loan checks, knowing that the checks had been embezzled or stolen. In addition, the Information alleges that on June 22, 2011, Wilson Lau transferred, possessed and used the social security number belonging to the rightful payee of a tax refund check cashed at American Quick Cash Depot.

Mr. Ferner commended the investigative efforts of the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division, and the United States Secret Service. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard P. Murad.

An Information is only an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Attachments:

Information (PDF)

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.

Technical comments about this website can be e-mailed to the Webmaster. PLEASE NOTE: The United States Attorney's Office does not respond to non-technical inquiries made to this website. If you wish to make a request for information, you may contact our office at 305-961-9001, or you may send a written inquiry to the United States Attorney's Office, Southern District of Florida, 99 NE 4th Street, Miami, FL 33132.

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