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FOUR INDIVIDUALS FROM SHREVEPORT INDICTED ON FEDERAL TAX FRAUD CHARGES

Indictment alleges amount of loss to be over \$118,000

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . Four individuals have been indicted by a federal grand jury for conspiracy to file false claims for tax refunds as well as the crime of filing false claims for tax refunds, United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced.

EUGENE O'BANNON, age 36, **SHAWN O'BANNON**, age 40, **DITA MICHELLE WHITE**, age 36, and **ANTONE M. AUTREY**, age 34, all of Shreveport, Louisiana, have each been indicted for tax fraud. The 48-count indictment charges all four defendants with one count of conspiracy to file false claims. The indictment also charges **EUGENE O'BANNON** with 15 counts of filing false claims for tax refunds; **SHAWN O'BANNON** with 21 counts of filing false claims for tax refunds; **DITA MICHELLE WHITE** with 7 counts of filing false claims for tax refunds; and **ANTONE AUTREY** with 4 counts of filing false claims for tax refunds.

The indictment alleges that the defendants participated in a scheme to defraud the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) by soliciting, instructing and assisting recruited individuals to falsely claim federal income

tax refunds for tax year 2003 by preparing and submitting false federal income tax returns. The indictment also alleges that the defendants created false Form W-2s for the recruited individuals which contained fabricated names of employers and amounts of tax withholdings. The false W-2s and other false receipts were taken to a commercial tax return preparer, which resulted in the preparation of in excess of 30 false federal income tax returns which claimed refunds to which the recruited individuals were not entitled to receive.

It is further alleged in the indictment that on some occasions, one or more of the defendants accompanied the recruited individuals to the office of the legitimate tax return preparer where the tax return had been prepared and filed electronically, and applied for refund anticipation loans through the tax return preparer. This allowed the recruited individuals to receive a cash advance on their false tax refunds. The amount of loss to the IRS is approximately \$118,459.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence under the law, and the government has the burden of proving every element of the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted, each defendant faces a sentence of not more than 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both, on the conspiracy count; and not more than 5 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both, on each false claims count.

This case was investigated by Criminal Investigation, Internal Revenue Service, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Martha J. Levardsen. The United States Marshal's Service and Shreveport Police Department assisted in the arrests of the defendants.

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