

The United States Attorney's Office

Eastern District of North Carolina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

TUESDAY - April 14, 2009

SIX ARE CRIMINALLY CHARGED

IN FALSE INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX RETURN SCHEME

RALEIGH - United States Attorney George E.B. Holding announced today a fifteen-count Indictment charging six individuals in North Carolina and Virginia with what the Indictment alleges was "an extensive scheme" to "submit false and fraudulent U.S. Individual Income Tax Returns claiming substantial tax refunds to the Internal Revenue Service." The six charged in United States v. Coombs et al., 7:09-CR-44-BR, are **ROBERT LEONARD COOMBS**, 47, of Winnabow, North Carolina; **CHARLES LEWIS CRITZER**, 62, of Crimora, Virginia; **LEWIS A. SHELTON**, 47, of Southport, North Carolina; **TAMI E. SHELTON**, 48, of Southport, North Carolina; **TIMOTHY M. DESFONDS**, 27, of Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina; and **TIMOTHY DANIEL TROTT**, 24, of Southport, North Carolina.

The Indictment, issued by the Grand Jury on April 8, 2009,

alleges that **COOMBS** organized the scheme to file in excess of 250 false tax returns with the IRS in order to generate fraudulent refunds. According to the Indictment, in order to generate these refunds, the false returns typically included false statements concerning the payment of federal gasoline taxes, and false occupations that would make reported payments appear legitimate.

The other six defendants, **CRITZER**, **LEWIS SHELTON**, **TAMI SHELTON**, **DESFONDS**, and **TROTT**, are alleged to have assisted **COOMBS** by collecting and bringing to him the identifying information **COOMBS** needed to file the returns, and by collecting the fraudulent refunds using their mailing addresses and bank accounts to do so.

Each defendant other than **COOMBS** is charged with four felonies -- a conspiracy and three substantive false claims counts. **COOMBS** is charged with the conspiracy and twelve false claims counts. Further, **COOMBS** is charged with the theft of public money and aggravated identity theft.

Investigation of the case was conducted by the Criminal Investigation Division of the Internal Revenue Service. Assistant United States Attorney Clay C. Wheeler is in charge of the prosecution.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the United States' burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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