

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Two Virgin Islands Women Indicted On Massive Tax-Related Fraud Scheme Charges

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ST. CROIX -- A Virgin Islands grand jury, on January 12 returned a 12- count indictment against two Virgin Islands women charging them with conspiracy to defraud the United States, theft of government property and aggravated identity theft, United States Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe announced today.

The women were identified in the indictment as Phiona A. Henry, 32, and Patricia Henry, 48. Patricia made her initial appearance on January 20, 2017, before Magistrate Judge George W. Cannon in St. Croix. Phiona made her appearance on February 1, 2017, before Magistrate Judge Thomas Smith in Orlando, Florida. Patricia was released pending trial, and a detention hearing is scheduled for Phiona tomorrow in Orlando.

The 12-count indictment is the result of years of investigative work by the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations conducting a probe into a massive stolen identity refund fraud scheme perpetrated in the Virgin Islands and elsewhere. According to the indictment, the scheme involved the filing of numerous false income tax returns, the use of the identification of others and the designation of illegal refunds to the defendants' bank accounts. The scheme resulted in the payment of illegal income tax refunds totaling over \$100,000, according to the indictment.

If convicted, the defendants face maximum sentences of ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for the conspiracy and theft of government property offenses. Additionally, they face a mandatory sentence of two years' imprisonment if convicted of aggravated identity theft.

The case was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alphonso Andrews, Jr.

United States Attorney Sharpe emphasized that an indictment is a merely a formal charging document and not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until February and unless proven guilty.