



Robert W. Wood

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IRS Lists Top Ten Criminal Tax Cases Of 2021

Any tax audit can be frightening, but criminal tax cases are the worst. And since it's time for Americans to start thinking about the 2021 tax returns and filing by April 18, the IRS has some reminders for us all. The IRS Criminal Investigation Division took to [Twitter](#) to count down the top 10 cases for 2021. Here were last year's top 10 Criminal IRS cases.

10. [Albuquerque couple sentenced to federal prison in Ayudando Guardians case](#). Susan Harris and William Harris were sentenced to 47 and 15 years in federal prison, respectively. They stole funds from Ayudando Guardians Inc., a nonprofit organization that provided guardianship, conservatorship and financial management to hundreds of people with special needs.

9. [Rochester man going to prison and ordered to pay millions in restitution for his role in Ponzi scheme that bilked investors out of millions of dollars](#). John Piccarreto Jr. was sentenced to 84 months in federal prison and ordered to pay restitution totaling \$19,842,613.66 after he was convicted of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and filing a false tax return. He conspired with others to obtain money through an investment fraud Ponzi scheme.

8.[Orlando sisters sentenced in \\$25 million tax fraud scheme](#). Petra Gomez and her co-conspirator, her sister, Jakeline Lumucso, were sentenced to eight and four years in federal prison, respectively. They operated a tax preparation business with five locations in central Florida that filed more than 16,000 false tax returns for clients from 2012 to 2016 with a total estimated loss to the IRS of \$25 million.



7.[Russian bank founder sentenced for evading exit tax upon renouncing U.S. citizenship](#). Oleg Tinkov, aka Oleg Tinkoff, was ordered to pay more than \$248 million in taxes and sentenced to time-served and one year of supervised release after he renounced his U.S. citizenship in an effort to conceal large stock gains that were reportable to the IRS after the company he founded became a multibillion dollar, publicly traded company.

[6. Ontario man who ran multimillion-dollar unlicensed bitcoin exchange business sentenced to 3 years in federal prison.](#) Hugo Sergio Mejia was sentenced to three years in federal prison and required to forfeit all assets derived from running an unlicensed business that exchanged at least \$13 million in Bitcoin and cash, and vice versa, often for drug traffickers. He charged commissions for the transactions and established separate companies to mask his true activity.

[5. Owner of bitcoin exchange sentenced to prison for money laundering.](#) Rossen G. Iossifov, a Bulgarian national, was sentenced to 121 months in federal prison for participating in a scheme where popular online auction and sales websites — such as Craigslist and eBay — falsely advertised high-cost goods (typically vehicles) that did not actually exist. Once victims sent payment for the goods, the conspiracy engaged in a complicated money laundering scheme where U.S.-based associates would accept victim funds, convert these funds to cryptocurrency, and transfer the cryptocurrency to foreign-based money launderers.

[4. Ex-pastor of Orange County church sentenced to 14 years in federal prison for orchestrating \\$33 million con that defrauded investors.](#) Kent R.E. Whitney, the ex-pastor of the Church of the Health Self, was sentenced to 14 years in federal prison and ordered to pay \$22.66 million in restitution to victims after defrauding investors of \$33 million by orchestrating a church-based investment scam. At his direction, church representatives appeared on television and at live seminars to make false and misleading claims to lure investors to invest in church entities. Victims sent more than \$33 million to the church and received fabricated monthly statements reassuring them that their funds had been invested, when in reality, little to no money ever was.

[**3.Prairie Village Man Sentenced to 12 Years for \\$7.3 Million Dollar Payday Loan Fraud, \\$8 Million Tax Evasion.**](#) Joel Tucker was sentenced to 12 years and six months in federal prison and ordered to pay over \$8 million in restitution to the IRS after selling false information or fictitious debts to payday loan businesses and not filing federal tax returns – for himself or his businesses – with the IRS for multiple years.

[**2.DC Solar owner sentenced to 30 years in prison for billion dollar Ponzi scheme.**](#) Jeff Carpooff, the owner of California-based DC Solar, was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison and forfeited \$120 million in assets to the U.S. government for victim restitution after creating a Ponzi-scheme that involved the sale of thousands of manufactured mobile solar generator units (MSGs) that didn't exist. He committed account and lease revenue fraud and purchased a sports team, luxury vehicles, real estate and a NASCAR team with the proceeds.

[**1.San Fernando Valley family members sentenced to years in prison for fraudulently obtaining tens of millions of dollars in COVID relief.**](#) The Ayvazyan family received sentences ranging from 17.5 years in prison to 10 months of probation for crimes ranging from bank and wire fraud to aggravated identity theft. The family used stolen and fictitious identities to submit 150 fraudulent applications for COVID-relief funds, based on phony payroll records and tax documents, to the Small Business Administration and then used the funds they received to purchase luxury homes, gold coins, jewelry designer handbags and more. Richard Ayvazyan and his wife Terabelian cut their ankle monitoring devices and absconded prior to their sentencing hearing; they are currently fugitives.

IRS-CI is the criminal investigative arm of the IRS, responsible for conducting financial crime investigations, including tax fraud, narcotics trafficking,

money-laundering, public corruption, healthcare fraud, identity theft and more. IRS-CI special agents are the only federal law enforcement agents with investigative jurisdiction over violations of the Internal Revenue Code, boasting a nearly 90 percent federal conviction rate.

Some criminal tax cases come out of plain old civil audits, and that fact alone is frightening. If an IRS auditor discovers something suspicious in a civil audit, the auditor can notify the IRS's Criminal Investigation Division. Notably, the IRS is not obligated to tell you that this criminal referral is occurring. In fact, normally, the civil auditors will suspend the audit without explanation. You might be pleased, thinking that the audit is over, or at least mercifully stalled so that it might not ever resume. Meanwhile, the IRS can be quietly building a criminal case against you, one of the ways [how IRS audits can become criminal investigations.](#)

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