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Here's the Tax Beat broadcast for February 18, 2026

Subject Line: Law and Order, Tax Crimes Unit

In the criminal justice system, tax-based offenses are considered especially heinous. The dedicated detectives who investigate these costly felonies are members of an elite squad known as the IRS Criminal Investigations unit. These are their stories.

Gong gong!

Every year, the IRS releases a list of their Top Ten criminal cases. [The 2025 entries](#), released last December, “demonstrate how following the money exposed public corruption, complex tax and cyber schemes, and pandemic-era fraud, enabling us to hold criminals accountable for millions in illicit gains,” said IRS-CI Chief Guy Ficco. So now, without further ado, let's take a look!

In Oklahoma, an enterprising casino manager decided to roll the dice on his own fortune: “In October 2025, Michael Anthony Houser of Oklahoma was sentenced to almost 8 years in prison and ordered to pay over \$17 million in restitution to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, as well as more than \$8 million in restitution to the IRS. While serving as a manager for the Muscogee Nation Gaming Enterprises LLC, Houser embezzled and obtained by fraud over \$24 million from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Houser knowingly filed false tax returns with the IRS where he underreported his income by failing to disclose the stolen proceeds to the IRS.”

In California, a politician must have excused his crimes by convincing himself it was OK if the money he stole went to charity: “Andrew Hoang Do, a former politician who served on California's Orange County Board of Supervisors, was sentenced in June 2025 to 60 months in federal prison for accepting more than \$550,000 in bribes for directing and voting in favor of more than \$10 million in COVID-19 pandemic relief funds to a charity affiliated with one of his daughters.”

In Arizona, a woman partnered with “the hermit kingdom” to benefit herself and her foreign accomplice: “Christina Marie Chapman of Arizona was sentenced in July 2025 to 102 months in prison for running a \$17 million remote worker scheme that generated revenue for herself and North Korea. She permitted remote workers with links to North Korea to pose as U.S. employees so they could illegally gain employment at more than 300 American companies. She stole the identities of around 70 U.S. citizens and submitted false information to federal agencies as part of the scheme.”

Finally, in Guam, a helicopter executive decided to put money over safety, and wound up with neither: “John Walker, the former CEO of Guam-based Hansen Helicopters Inc., was sentenced to 405 months in federal prison and ordered to forfeit \$58.4 million. Walker used co-conspirators, shell companies, employees,

contractors, and nominees to operate an illicit helicopter business from Guam. Concealing that his aircraft were unregistered, illegally registered, and not airworthy, Walker earned over \$400 million dollars through his scheme. This scheme resulted in at least 38 accidents or incidents, including at least eight serious bodily injuries and 10 deaths.”

All of these cases involve more than just failing to pay tax on stolen money. The IRS typically prosecutes only around 1,000 cases per year, a tiny number compared to the 240 million or so returns it receives. So they have to choose carefully. Obviously, a helicopter pilot killing his passengers will rank higher on their list than a social media influencer telling you to deduct your trip to Mexico if you shoot a video for your business there. (Pro tip: probably not.)

Most taxpayers – and even most tax professionals like us – go their entire lives without crossing paths with IRS-CI. Our job is to help you pay less, the honest way. Sometimes, that’s a little harder than just stealing. But it’s worth the work for you to keep more of what you earn *and* get a good night’s sleep!

Kevin

