

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Maryland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Former FEMA Employee Pleads Guilty to Aiding in the Preparation of False Tax Returns

Greenbelt, Maryland – Shanta Johnson, age 44, of Germantown, Maryland, pleaded guilty yesterday to aiding in the preparation of false tax returns.

The guilty plea was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erik L. Barron; Special Agent in Charge Darrell J. Waldon of the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Washington, D.C. Field Office; and Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General.

According to her guilty plea, from January 2013 through at least April 2016, while employed at the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA"), Shanta Johnson prepared and filed false tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") on behalf of her taxpayer clients. As detailed in court documents, Johnson prepared at least some of these returns while at work at FEMA. The false items on these tax returns included false deductions, fictional businesses and business expenses, and fake education expenses – all of which were designed to increase her clients' tax refunds. Johnson charged money for her services and, in many cases, directed a portion of her clients' refunds into more than twenty bank accounts she controlled. Johnson did not report the income she received for preparing tax returns on her own tax returns. In total, Johnson prepared at least 194 tax returns. She created and used numerous email accounts to establish accounts in the names of her clients on the online tax preparation software she used to make it appear as if her clients were preparing their own tax returns. Johnson did not list herself as the paid tax preparer on any of them, as required under IRS rules. She caused a tax loss to the IRS of \$217,424.

Johnson and the government have agreed that, if the Court accepts the plea agreement, Johnson will be sentenced to between six and 15 months in federal prison and will be required to pay restitution to the IRS. U.S. District Judge George J. Hazel has scheduled sentencing for August 30, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

United States Attorney Erik L. Barron and Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart M. Goldberg commended the IRS-CI and DHS-OIG for their work in the investigation and thanked the Maryland Comptroller's Office for its assistance. Mr. Barron thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Caitlin R. Cottingham and Trial Attorney Sam Bean of the Justice Department's Tax Division, who are prosecuting the case.

For more information on the Maryland U.S. Attorney's Office, its priorities, and resources available to help the community, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-md and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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Topic(s):

Tax

Component(s):

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