

**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**NEWS RELEASE:**

**Wellington Man Sentenced to 60 Months for Heroin, Identity Theft and Filing False Tax Return Charges**

A Wellington resident was sentenced to 60 months in prison for possession with intent to distribute heroin, identity theft and filing false tax return charges.

Wifredo A. Ferrer, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Brian Swain, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Secret Service (USSS), Miami Field Office, Kelly R. Jackson, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI), Rafiq Ahmad, Special Agent in Charge, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations Miami Office (DOL-OIG), and Ric Bradshaw, Sheriff, Palm Beach County Sherriff's Office (PBSO), made the announcement.

**Christopher Richard Edwards**, 26, of Wellington, was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Kenneth A. Marra to 60 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release. Edwards was also ordered to pay \$212,936 in restitution.

According to the Superseding Information and court documents, a search warrant was executed on Edwards' apartment, during which law enforcement found approximately 159 access device cards in other peoples' names, three laptop computers, an encoder/decoder, a credit card embosser, a currency counter machine, and several ledgers containing personal identifying information (PII). In addition to the evidence of identity theft and access device fraud, agents also recovered 66 capsules containing heroin, a digital scale, and a plate containing heroin residue.

A forensic examination of Edwards' computer revealed substantial filings for unemployment benefits, consistent with the unemployment benefit cards found in his apartment. The unemployment claims filed from Edwards' computer in 2014 totaled \$287,360. Law enforcement also determined that Edwards filed 41 federal tax returns containing false information in the names of others claiming a total of \$299,240 in false tax refunds.

The total amount of loss attributable to Edwards is \$586,600, including the actual payments and intended fraud. Restitution payable for the paid unemployment claims and tax returns totals \$212,936.

Mr. Ferrer commended the investigative efforts of USSS, IRS-CI, DOL-OIG, and PBSO. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lauren E. Jorgensen.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls). Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at [www.flsd.uscourts.gov](http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov) or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.