



# TRS Newspaper

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6345 Balboa Blvd., Bldg. IV, Suite 195 Encino, CA 91316

1-(866) IRS-PROBLEMS or (818) 774-1813 / [www.taxresolution.com](http://www.taxresolution.com)

## The IRS Steamroller Just Getting Started

**Have you been naughty or nice? Uncle Sam wants to know — and he's doing a lot to find out**

For U.S. taxpayers cheating here and there — or maybe just about everywhere — on their taxes, this news should send a chill up the spine.

Federal prosecutors in Miami have indicted not Joe Six-Pack for tax evasion — but Joe Six-Pack's boss' boss' boss.

Raoul Weil, a senior executive of a large Swiss bank with offices worldwide, including the United States, has been charged with conspiring with other executives, managers, private bankers and clients of the banking firm to defraud the United States.

According to the criminal indictment, from 2002 to 2007, Weil oversaw the Swiss bank's cross-border private banking business that provided services to about 20,000 U.S. clients who reportedly concealed \$20 billion in assets from the IRS.

Weil — who allegedly referred to this business as "toxic waste" — mandated that Swiss bankers grow the cross-border business despite knowing this would cause bankers to violate U.S. law.

In announcing the indictment, IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman said in a statement: "The IRS is aggressively pursuing anyone who helps wealthy individuals hide their assets offshore and dodge the tax system. As the global commerce and capital flows continue to increase, we have stepped up our efforts on international tax evasion."

Government officials often can be faulted for blowing hot air.

But Schulman isn't.

In fact, 2008 has been something of a banner year for the IRS. Investigations and collections are up. Tax enforcement revenue reached \$59.2 billion.

The IRS has also settled disputes with such U.S.

titans as drug maker Merck, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the once-powerful law firm J&G and Sidley Austin, a law firm that paid \$39.4 million in penalties for promoting abusive tax shelters.

Then there are the celebrities.

Richard Hatch, who won the first season of CBS's hit show *Survivor*, is now in prison for failing to report \$1 million in prize money.

Actor Wesley Snipes didn't report to the IRS two contracts he received worth more than \$10 million. He was convicted of three misdemeanor counts of failing to file a tax return.

Other well-known targets of IRS investigation in 2008 include singer Marc Anthony and Joe Francis, the producer of the *Girls Gone Wild* videos.

And then there are the thousands of Average Joes nationwide who have been audited or charged with tax evasion this year.

At every level, the IRS has become increasingly aggressive in pursuing tax cheats. The tax-collecting agency is not only going after those U.S. taxpayers who try to avoid taxes, but also their alleged enablers — people such as Raoul Weil.

Since 2008 is quickly drawing to a close, now might be a good time to ask yourself this:

Are you willing to have the IRS in your life in 2009 the way it was for so many other folks in 2008?

*Michael Rozbruch is a Certified Tax Resolution Specialist, a member of the American Society of IRS Problem Solvers and a Maryland CPA. You can contact him at 866-477-7762 to obtain a free subscription to his newsletter titled *The IRS Times & Inquirer*.*