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FORMER SOUTHWEST AIRLINES EMPLOYEE AND HUSBAND PLEAD GUILTY IN FRAUD SCHEME

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that Althea Holden Jackson and her husband James Jackson have pleaded guilty to their role in a scheme to defraud her employer, Southwest Airlines. Both defendants pled guilty to wire fraud and are scheduled to be sentenced on May 8, 2008.

By pleading guilty today, Althea Jackson, admitted that while employed as an Administrative Assistant in the executive offices of Southwest Airlines she would order Southwest Airlines Non Revenue Must Ride (NRMR) tickets from the ticketing department ostensibly for the purpose of thanking Southwest passengers who assisted flight crews in the performance of their in-flight duties, including rendering aid to passengers who sustained injuries or became ill while onboard a Southwest Airlines flight. Rather than following established Airline protocol and mailing NRMR tickets along with a letter of appreciation to deserving passengers, Althea Jackson, fraudulently obtained these NRMR tickets and kept them for her own purposes.

Ms. Jackson and her husband James Jackson created an informal distribution system through friends, relatives, acquaintances and James Jackson's co-workers at the Bexar County Justice Center where he was employed as a deputy sheriff. The Jackson's used this distribution system for financial gain by selling Southwest Airlines NRMR tickets at prices that were substantially less than the price that Southwest could command for the same ticket in the market place. Over 5,600 of these NRMR tickets were acquired fraudulently by Althea Jackson and distributed by her and her co-conspirators.

This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and is being prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorney's Bill Baumann and David Counts.

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