



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Alabama

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ARTHUR LEE BONNER SENTENCED FOR DEFRAUDING FEMA FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA

MOBILE, AL-- Arthur Lee Bonner, 20, was sentenced today for defrauding the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following Hurricane Katrina, United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes of the Southern District of Alabama announced today.

Bonner was sentenced to the two months he has served in federal custody and was ordered by United States District Judge William H. Steele to pay \$2,000 in restitution to FEMA. On September 19, 2005, Bonner called FEMA, requesting assistance following Hurricane Katrina, claiming that he was at the time homeless, but that his home at 803 Broad Street in Mobile had suffered damage in the hurricane. FEMA mailed a check in the amount of \$2,000.00 to Bonner at 803 Broad Street, which Bonner cashed. Investigation revealed that Bonner was in fact incarcerated in the Okaloosa County, Florida jail during Hurricane Katrina, and that he did not live at 803 Broad Street either during the storm or afterward. Bonner pled guilty to one count of making false claims to the government.

“We are aggressively investigating and prosecuting hurricane-related crimes, and will bring to justice those who sought to profit personally and fraudulently following Hurricane Katrina,” said Rhodes. To date, 10 individuals have been charged in the Southern District with crimes related to Hurricane Katrina and the recovery efforts.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force - chaired by Assistant Attorney general Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, and others.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Sean Costello.

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