



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr.

Southern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2006
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/TXS/

CONTACT: JOHN YEMBRICK
PH: (713) 567-9388
FX: (713) 718-3389

HOUSTON RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO HURRICANES RELIEF FRAUD

HOUSTON – Gregory Parks, also known as Paige Mahogany, 33, of Houston, Texas, has been convicted of mail fraud and aggravated identity theft for filing numerous fraudulent applications with FEMA for Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disaster assistance, U.S. Attorney Donald DeGabrielle of the Southern District of Texas announced today.

At a hearing held before U.S. District Judge Lee Rosenthal, Parks pleaded guilty to the federal felony charges of mail fraud and aggravated identity theft. Parks' sentencing is set for Jan. 28, 2007, where he faces a mandatory two years in prison for the aggravated identity theft charge and up to 20 years in prison for the mail fraud conviction. The conviction also carries a maximum fine of \$250,000.

Investigation revealed that between Sept. 12, 2005, and Oct. 27, 2005, Parks submitted at least 15 separate applications to FEMA for Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disaster assistance, using 15 distinct and assigned Social Security numbers and 15 different "damaged addresses" in New Orleans and Lake Charles, La.; and Orange, Port Arthur and Port Neches, Texas. Investigation further revealed that Parks was residing in Houston, prior to and during both storms and that he was not entitled to disaster assistance. Parks received funds from the U.S. Department of Treasury for 10 of his applications for a total of \$35,548 prior to the discovery of his fraudulent conduct.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to deter, detect and prosecute unscrupulous individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disasters. Headed by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, the Task Force is comprised of federal, state and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the United States Attorney's Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

This case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jason Varnado.

Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours per day, seven days per week until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the DHS Office of Inspector General at dhsoghline@dhs.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to:

Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC. 20528
Attn: Office of Inspector General, Hotline

The Department of Justice Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force and Federal Trade Commission Consumer Response Center will also accept disaster fraud information. To provide information to the Justice Department, access the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov. The Federal Trade Commission accepts disaster fraud information on its toll-free line, 1-877-382-4357, or TTY 202-326-2502 for persons with speech or hearing impairment.

###