



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Louisiana

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**CHARGES FILED IN FEDERAL COURT AGAINST INDEPENDENCE
POLICE CHIEF AND CAPTAIN**

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA - Jim Letten, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana, James Bernazzani, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Michael Brannan, Special Agent in Charge, Office of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security, and Charles Foti, Attorney General for the State of Louisiana, announced today the filing of a Bill of Information against Jesse Pingno, Chief of the Independence Police Department and Brian Lamarca, a captain with the Independence Police Department, charging each with Theft of Government Property in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 641 and 2. According to the Bill of Information, the defendants submitted false and inflated documents to FEMA for overtime hours not worked and vehicle mileage not actually incurred by the police department.

The charges arise as a result of a scheme to defraud FEMA out of reimbursements not actually due to the police department. Following Hurricane Katrina, FEMA agreed to reimburse qualifying police departments for overtime hours worked by officers in the aftermath of the storm. FEMA also agreed to pay for police equipment used during these overtime hours, such as vehicle usage. By inflating the overtime hours worked by officers within the department, Pingno and Lamarca knowingly stole money belonging to the United States valued in excess of \$1,000.00

If convicted, Pingno and Lamarca each face a maximum sentence of ten (10) years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.00.

U. S. Attorney Letten reiterated that a Bill of Information is merely a method of charging a defendant and that every defendant so charged is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

This matter was investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security - Office of the Inspector General and the Office of the Louisiana Attorney General. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Brian Marcelle and Richard R. Pickens, II.

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