

# NEWS RELEASE



*Office of the United States Attorney  
Western District of Louisiana*

**DONALD W. WASHINGTON**  
United States Attorney

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United States Courthouse • 300 Fannin Street, Suite 3201 • Shreveport, Louisiana 71101-3068 • (318) 676-3600  
United States Courthouse • 800 Lafayette Street, Suite 2200 • Lafayette, Louisiana 70501-7206 • (337) 262-6618

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**For Immediate Release**  
**October 27, 2006**  
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**Contact: Donald W. Washington (337-262-6618)**  
**William J. Flanagan (318-676-3600)**

## **TWO SENTENCED, ONE PLED GUILTY TO FEMA FRAUD CHARGES**

### **Federal Prison to be new address for Hurricane Katrina fraudsters**

LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that **DWANA MARTIN**, age 40, from Fort Smith, Arkansas, was sentenced today in federal court to 21 months imprisonment to be followed by 3 years supervised release by United States District Judge Rebecca Doherty for mail fraud. MARTIN was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$4,748.43.

MARTIN was indicted in December of 2005, after an investigation determined she made a false claim for disaster relief funds following Hurricane Katrina. MARTIN applied for \$2,000 in disaster relief funds in September 2005, claiming she had evacuated from New Orleans, Louisiana as a result of Hurricane Katrina. MARTIN had the check mailed to her aunt's home located in the Western District of Louisiana. When the defendant's aunt received the check and discovered it was a FEMA disaster relief check, she contacted law enforcement.

In an unrelated matter, **DAMIEN LAMONT CHEVIS**, age 25, from Opelousas, Louisiana, was sentenced by Judge Doherty to **10 months federal imprisonment to be followed by 3 years supervised release** for mail fraud. CHEVIS was indicted in March of 2006 after investigations revealed that he illegally applied for emergency benefits following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. CHEVIS stated that he was living in, and evacuated from, Gulfport, Mississippi. CHEVIS received \$2,000 in emergency benefits from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In truth, CHEVIS was living in Opelousas, Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina and was unaffected by the hurricane. CHEVIS pled guilty to the charge in June of 2006 at which time he admitted to buying clothing with the ill-gotten funds.

In another matter before Judge Doherty today, **JOHN MOUTON, age 44, from Lafayette, Louisiana**, pled guilty to mail fraud. In September 2005, MOUTON applied for \$2,000 emergency money and \$2,358 in rental assistance as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Investigations revealed that MOUTON's primary address is in Lafayette, Louisiana, and that the New Orleans address he used in applying for federal disaster relief was not his residence. In pleading guilty today, MOUTON admitted that the last time he visited the New Orleans address was two weeks prior to Hurricane Katrina. He knew the people who lived at the address and occasionally stayed there when he was visiting or working in New Orleans.

Sentencing for MOUTON will be scheduled for a later date to be determined by the Court. MOUTON faces up to 10 years federal imprisonment, a fine of not more than \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to three years.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

To date, the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Louisiana has charged 43 defendants with violations related to FEMA relief funds, and more than 116 FEMA fraud investigations are on-going in the Western District of Louisiana.

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 members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the postal Inspector's Office, and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, among others.

These cases were investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Luke Walker.

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