



Department of Justice

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TWO MORE INDICTED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON FEDERAL FEMA FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today that a federal grand jury returned indictments against two more Louisiana residents on federal FEMA fraud charges.

EZRA HARRIS, age 38, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits (Count One) and with illegal conversion of government property, that is, a check from FEMA for expedited disaster assistance (Count Two). The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Secret Service; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General. If convicted on Count One, HARRIS faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. If convicted on Count Two, HARRIS faces a maximum sentence of ten years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

TINA PROFIT, age 34, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a three-count indictment with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits (Count One), illegal use of a Social Security number (Count Two), and illegal conversion of government property, that is, a check from FEMA for expedited disaster assistance (Count Three). The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Secret Service; the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General. If convicted on Counts One or Two, PROFIT faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine per count. If convicted on Count Three, PROFIT faces a maximum sentence of ten years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

These individuals bring the total number of defendants who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to FEMA relief funds to forty-nine.

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.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443.

NOTE: An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendants. The defendants, of course, are presumed innocent until and unless he or she is proven guilty at trial.

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