



Department of Justice

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ARREST FOR FRAUD IN OBTAINING DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT DEBIT CARDS

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that SCOTT LEE ROBERTS, age 40, formerly of Orlando, Florida, was charged in a criminal complaint signed by a magistrate judge in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on February 16, 2006, with wire fraud and false use of Social Security numbers to obtain disaster unemployment debit cards for alleged losses resulting from Hurricane Katrina. ROBERTS had been arrested in Sacramento, California, on other charges on January 23, 2006, and was being held in Orlando, Florida.

The criminal complaint, unsealed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, alleges that eight debit cards issued by the Louisiana Department of Labor to pay Disaster Unemployment Assistance benefits were in ROBERTS' possession at the time of his arrest. Based upon information obtained from the applications for these cards, the social security numbers on the applications did not match the legitimate names associated with the social security numbers. The complaint alleges that the eight claims were received by telephone at the Louisiana Department of Labor from the period October 25, 2005, through November 23, 2005, and that the debit cards created as a result of these claims were mailed to various addresses in the Billings, Montana, area.

The subject debit cards were issued by the Louisiana Department of Labor as Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), which provides financial assistance to individuals whose employment has been lost or interrupted as a result of a major disaster declared by the President of the United States. The Louisiana Department of Labor administers the DUA program for the State of Louisiana, the funding for which comes from federal funds provided by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). This arrest brings the total number of defendants who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to FEMA relief funds to thirty-five.

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.

The case is being investigated by Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General; the

Sacramento, California, Police Department; and the Billings, Montana, Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ian Hipwell is prosecuting the case in Baton Rouge.

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: A complaint is merely an accusation by a law enforcement official, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty at trial.

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