



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 15, 2007
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MONTGOMERY FATHER AND SON INDICTED WITH HURRICANE KATRINA AND RITA FRAUD, AND TWO OTHERS FACE SENTENCING FOR KATRINA FRAUD

MONTGOMERY, Ala.—A Montgomery father and son, James Lassic, Jr., and Andre Saquan Lassic, ages 56 and 21, respectively, were indicted on two counts of theft of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita disaster assistance funds. Additionally, two other Montgomery residents, Ina Michelle Allen, age 19, and Ira Kenyatta McGhee, age 29, are to be sentenced after pleading guilty to theft of Hurricane Katrina funds, U.S. Attorney Leura G. Canary announced today.

The Lassic's indictment charges that Mr. James Lassic, Jr., filed false claims for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, with the assistance of a neighbor, in the names of his daughter and of his son, Andre Lassic. The indictment further charges that the Lassic's then illegally cashed and converted two \$2,000 FEMA disaster relief assistance checks to which they were not entitled.

Mr. James Lassic, Jr., was arrested and released on bond yesterday afternoon, May 14, 2006. Mr. Andre Lassic turned himself into authorities on Thursday, May 10, 2006, and was released on bond the same day. Mr. Andre Lassic's trial is set for July 9, 2007, before Chief U.S. District Judge Mark Fuller. Mr. James Lassic's trial will be set at a later date. If convicted of all charges, Mr. James Lassic could face imprisonment of up to twenty years, and Mr. Andre Lassic could face imprisonment of up to ten years.

Additionally, sentencing has been set in two other Hurricane Katrina related cases. Ina Michelle Allen is scheduled to be sentenced on June 14, 2007, by U.S. District Judge Harold Albritton, and Ira Kenyatta McGhee is scheduled to be sentenced on July 19, 2007, by U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson. Both Allen and McGhee had previously pleaded guilty to one count charges of theft of \$2,000 in Hurricane Katrina funds. Each is facing a prison sentence of up to ten years and will be ordered to pay restitution for the thefts.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama is a member of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales in September 2005 to deter, detect, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes. The Task Force, chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of DOJ's Criminal Division, is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, and United States Attorneys' Offices from the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

An indictment is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty at trial beyond a reasonable doubt.

These matters have been investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, and are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher A. Snyder. Thus far, the Middle District of Alabama has charged a total of 19 Hurricane Katrina and Rita fraud-related cases involving 21 different defendants.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the Department of Homeland Security Office or the Inspector General Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721.

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