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5 MORE HURRICANE KATRINA FEDERAL FRAUD CASES INDICTED,

2 OTHER DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY AS CRACKDOWN CONTINUES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

David E. Nahmias, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia; Richard L. Skinner, Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security; Martin Phanco, Inspector in Charge, United States Postal Service; and Gregory Jones, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, announce today that a federal grand jury has returned five indictments charging five individuals with fraud offenses involving the illegal receipt of Hurricane Katrina relief funds disbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and that in two other separate cases, defendants have pleaded guilty to illegally receiving FEMA funds intended for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

According to Nahmias the indictments, other court documents, and information presented in court:

- Today NAKIA DEWUANE GRIMES, 30, of Atlanta, Georgia, pleaded guilty to a criminal information, on a charge of using the mail to defraud the United States government. GRIMES completed an application with FEMA on or about September 14, 2005, claiming that she lived in New Orleans and was a victim of Hurricane Katrina. GRIMES applied for \$2,000 in FEMA funds available to victims of Hurricane Katrina and provided an Atlanta-area address for the funds to be mailed to her, even though GRIMES had never lived in New Orleans and was not harmed by Hurricane Katrina. On September 20, 2005, GRIMES was notified by the United States Postal Service that she had a letter that she needed to sign for at the Post Office. GRIMES arrived at the

Post Office and was arrested after she signed for and accepted the letter from FEMA containing the \$2,000 relief check. GRIMES could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentencing is scheduled for March 14, 2006, before United States District Judge Clarence Cooper.

- On December 9, 2005, JOZELL LOIS DICKERSON, 35, of Lawrenceville, Georgia, pleaded guilty to two counts of a federal indictment, admitting that on September 8 and 14, 2005, she filed two separate false claims through the internet to FEMA claiming that she was a resident of New Orleans and a victim of Hurricane Katrina. DICKERSON used two different New Orleans addresses in the claims, and used two different social security numbers, neither one actually belonging to her. FEMA processed both fraudulent claims, and DICKERSON was issued two checks of \$2,000 each. DICKERSON faces a maximum prison sentence of 20 years and a maximum fine of up to \$500,000. Sentencing for DICKERSON is scheduled for February 16, 2006, before United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr.

- HENRY P. EDWARDS, 41, of Atlanta, Georgia; FREDDIE E. WILFORD, 26, of Norcross, Georgia; VALERIE L. CAYTON, 24, of Norcross, Georgia; DWIGHT THOMAS, 21, of Doraville, Georgia; and KATRILLUS WHITE, 19, of Doraville, Georgia, have been charged with unlawfully receiving FEMA funds that were intended for Hurricane Katrina victims. The federal grand jury charged EDWARDS, WILFORD, CAYTON, THOMAS and WHITE in separate indictments filed under seal on December 6, 2005. The indictments were unsealed today. The indictments charge EDWARDS, WILFORD, CAYTON, THOMAS and WHITE with mail fraud, making false statements to FEMA in order to obtain Hurricane Katrina victim assistance, and stealing FEMA funds.

According to the indictments, in September of 2005, the defendants each falsely represented to FEMA that they were residents of hurricane-impacted portions of Louisiana at the time Hurricane Katrina made landfall, when in fact they were residing in Georgia. To perpetuate the fraud, each defendant allegedly provided a Louisiana address which did not belong to them,

and falsely claimed that their residence was damaged by the hurricane. Relying on their material misrepresentations, FEMA sent \$2,000 emergency housing assistance checks, via U.S. mail, to the Georgia mailing addresses that they provided. CAYTON and THOMAS also received additional checks in the amount of \$2,358 for rental assistance.

David Nahmias, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia said, "The two defendants who have pleaded guilty, and allegedly, the five defendants who were indicted last week all hatched their fraudulent schemes while the shocking images of destruction from Hurricane Katrina were still fresh in the minds of all Americans. The federal funds that the defendants fraudulently obtained were intended to help relieve the enormous financial losses suffered by the many real victims of the hurricane. A number of federal agencies are investigating individuals who have engaged in this type of fraud, and federal prosecutors will continue to take all necessary steps to bring these criminals to justice."

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales recently created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as fraud involving government funds and charity and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force - chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes representatives from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspection Service Office, the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, and other cooperating federal agencies.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment contains only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

These cases are being investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security, and Inspectors with the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant United States Attorneys BJay Pak, Richard M. Langway, and Aaron M. Danzig

are prosecuting the cases.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney or F. Gentry Shelnett, Chief, Criminal Division, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.