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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NASA AND SSA EMPLOYEES INDICTED FOR
CONSPIRACY AND RECEIPT OF \$52,534 IN STOLEN DISABILITY BENEFITS**

BALTIMORE, Maryland - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Allen F. Loucks announces that a federal grand jury has indicted Franklin G. Thomas, age 34, of Baltimore, Maryland and Andrea D. Harrison, age 38, of Towson, Maryland, in connection with receiving \$52,534.50 in social security disability payments.

The one-count indictment returned on May 25, 2005 and unsealed today upon the arrests of the defendants, charges that from October 26, 2004 to about May 2, 2005, the defendants conspired to receive stolen government funds. According to the indictment, Thomas was employed as a benefit authorizer by the Social Security Administration (SSA), at its Office of Disability Operations in Woodlawn, Maryland. A benefit authorizer determines the amount payable to a claimant based on accrual months, deductions and adjustments, and maintains the master beneficiary record. As a benefit authorizer, Thomas also processed payments to legal representatives for claimants, including attorneys. Harrison was employed as a Lead Human Resources Specialist at the National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA) at the Goddard Space Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

According to the indictment, Thomas logged on to the SSA computer system and located

claimants who did not have attorney information in their files. Thomas instructed the system to make 11 payments to “Andrea Harrison, attorney for [claimant]” and listed Harrison’s home address as the mailing address for the payments. Harrison was not licensed to practice law or act as an attorney for claimants before the SSA. Harrison deposited and/or cashed the checks at her personal banks.

Each defendant faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison followed by 3 years of supervised release. Harrison had her initial appearance at 11:00 a.m. today and Thomas will have his initial appearance at 3:00 p.m.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

The criminal charges in this indictment are the result of a joint investigation by the Social Security Administration - Office of Inspector General, the National Aeronautics Space Administration - Office of Inspector General, and the United States Attorney’s Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie A. Gallagher.