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**BALTIMORE MAN AND TOWSON WOMAN PLEAD GUILTY
TO MAIL AND WIRE FRAUD**

BALTIMORE, Maryland - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein announces that today Franklin Thomas, age 35, of Baltimore, and Andrea D. Harrison a/k/a Andrea D. Ables, age 38, of Towson, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Court Judge Richard D. Bennett to one count of mail fraud and one count of wire fraud.

According to the agreed statement of facts presented to the court, Andrea D. Harrison worked in the Office of Human Resources at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in Greenbelt, Maryland. In her capacity within the Office of Leadership and Organizational Development, Ms. Harrison had authority to act as a Contracting Officer to procure goods and services relating to leadership and organizational training and development, and to obligate NASA funds to pay for those services.

Franklin G. Thomas worked for the Social Security Administration (SSA) as a benefit authorizer in Woodlawn, Maryland. In that capacity, one of Mr. Thomas's duties was to process payments of SSA funds to legal representatives of Social Security claimants. Mr. Thomas performed no work for and provided no goods or services to NASA.

From 1996-2005, Ms. Harrison prepared or caused to be prepared a series of NASA purchase orders payable to some variation of "The Franklin Thomas Group." Ms. Harrison subsequently certified that services or goods had been received from "The Franklin Thomas Group," and assisted Mr. Thomas in providing the documentation required by NASA to process payment. As a result of the fraudulent representations and documentation provided by Ms. Harrison and Mr. Thomas, wire transfers in the total amount of \$194,749.98 were sent from the United States Treasury to Mr. Thomas's personal bank account. Mr. Thomas and Ms. Harrison shared in the proceeds.

During 2004-2005, Mr. Thomas processed a series of eleven SSA payments to Ms. Harrison. Mr. Thomas, using a manual override computer function, instructed the SSA system to make

payments to “Andrea Harrison, attorney for [claimant].” Ms. Harrison is not licensed to practice law and did not represent any claimants before the SSA. As a result of the computer entries by Mr. Thomas, checks were mailed via the United States Postal Service to Andrea Harrison at her home address. The total amount of the checks was \$52,534.50. Ms. Harrison cashed and/or deposited those checks at her personal banks and shared the proceeds with Mr. Thomas.

The total amount of the loss to the Government from the above schemes was \$247,284.48.

Each defendant faces a maximum sentence of twenty years in prison and three years of supervised release. Judge Bennett has scheduled Thomas’s sentencing for December 19, 2005 at 2 pm and Harrison’s sentencing for December 20, 2005 at 9:30 am.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein commended the Office of Inspector General of the Social Security Administration and the Office of Inspector General of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein also praised Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie A. Gallagher, who is prosecuting the case.