



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, JUNE 18, 2007
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TWO MORE INDICTED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON FRAUD CHARGES RELATED TO A HURRICANE DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAM

BATON ROUGE, LA – Two more Louisiana residents were indicted in federal court last week on charges of fraud related to hurricane disaster relief programs, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today.

ARETHA L. MORRIS, age 26, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged on June 13, 2007, in a two-count indictment by a federal grand jury with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits and with making false and fraudulent statements to FEMA. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. If convicted, MORRIS faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count.

PAMELA D. WHITAKER, age 44, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged on June 13, 2007, in an indictment with two counts of mail fraud in connection with checks received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for expedited disaster assistance. The case was investigated by the U. S. Postal Inspection Service. If convicted, WHITAKER faces a maximum sentence of thirty years imprisonment, a \$1,000,000 fine, or both, per count.

Last week's indictments bring the total number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds to one hundred eleven.

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 the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

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. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

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