



Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Mary Beth Buchanan
Western District of Pennsylvania**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2006
www.usdoj.gov/usao/paw/

U.S. POST OFFICE & COURTHOUSE
700 GRANT STREET SUITE 4000
PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
TEL: (412) 644-3500

**MIAMI MAN INDICTED IN ONLINE SCHEME TO DEFRAUD
HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF CONTRIBUTORS AND PNC BANK CUSTOMERS**

United States Attorney Mary Beth Buchanan announced today, August 16, 2006, that on August 15, 2006, Jovany Desir of Miami, Florida was indicted by a federal grand jury in Pittsburgh on charges of wire fraud related to an online scheme to steal credit card and other sensitive financial information from those seeking to donate to Hurricane Katrina disaster relief efforts or conduct online banking through PNC Bank.

The five-count indictment named Desir, age 20, as the sole defendant.

According to Ms. Buchanan, the indictment alleges that from in and around July 2005 to in and around October 2005, Desir created and sold fraudulent web sites, known as "phishing" sites, designed to deceive persons who believed they were dealing with legitimate web site locations for banks, charitable organizations, and online auction and payment services. The phishing web sites, packaged in "phishing kits" that sometimes included online testimonials requesting donations, recorded personal financial information of individuals deceived into believing they were providing the information on the legitimate web site, including customer names, addresses, credit card numbers, bank account numbers, passwords, PIN numbers, Credit Verification Values (CVVs), and related information for bank accounts, credit cards and online auction and payment services. Among the fraudulent web sites Desir created were ones mimicking sites for the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina disaster relief efforts, PNC Bank, eBay, Paypal and two Canadian financial institutions, Banque Nationale and Desjardins Credit Union. Desir sold the phishing sites to would-be scammers for approximately \$150 each. One such site, for Banque Nationale, received approximately 8,500 "hits", while the Red Cross site was downloaded by approximately 56 individuals.

The law provides for a maximum sentence on all counts of 50 years in prison, a fine of \$1,000,000, or both. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed would be based upon the seriousness of the offense and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendant.

Assistant United States Attorneys Luke Dembosky and Paul E. Hull are prosecuting this case. The United States Secret Service, assisted by the Pennsylvania State Police Computer Crime Task Force, conducted the investigation that led to the indictment of Desir.

Desir is the first individual that has been charged in the Western District of Pennsylvania with violations related to hurricane Katrina.

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 members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, among others.

Anyone with information about fraudulent activity is encouraged to report it immediately through the Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721, or via email at katrinafraud@dodig.mil.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

###