



Department of Justice

United States Attorney John C. Richter
Western District of Oklahoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2006
www.usdoj.gov/

CONTACT: BOB TROESTER
TEL: (405) 553-8999
FAX: (405) 55387420

LAWTON WOMAN SENTENCED TO SERVE TWO YEARS IN PRISON FOR THEFT OF FEMA HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF FUNDS

Five Lawton Residents Now Convicted for FEMA Related Fraud

OKLAHOMA CITY – Shelia Ann Perry, 38, of Lawton, Okla. was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange to serve 24 months in prison for theft of Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Hurricane Katrina disaster relief funds, U.S. Attorney John C. Richter of the Western District of Oklahoma announced. Ms. Perry was also ordered to pay restitution to FEMA in the amount of \$18,000.

According to a superseding indictment filed on Feb. 22, 2006, Perry cashed a Hurricane Katrina disaster relief check made out in her name on Sept. 16, 2005. When she entered a guilty plea on May 4 of this year, she admitted that she knew when she cashed the check that she was not entitled to any disaster relief money because she lived in Lawton at the time of Hurricane Katrina and did not live at the Louisiana address on her application for FEMA assistance. Ms. Perry has also admitted that she played a leadership role in the activities of others who received money from FEMA through fraud.

“Those seeking to defraud FEMA following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina do not just live in the states hit by the hurricane,” stated U.S. Attorney Richter. “This case, as well as many others pursued by the Department of Justice Katrina Fraud Task Force, demonstrates that individuals throughout the country have greedily sought to exploit the suffering of others for their personal benefit. We have zero tolerance for FEMA fraud which seeks to steal taxpayer money intended to help those harmed by the hurricane disaster.”

Within the last five months, there have been five individuals who have been sentenced and/or convicted of FEMA fraud related offenses in the Western District of Oklahoma. The following two were charged with Perry:

- On March 24, 2006, Sean Donnell Williams, 27, of Lawton, was sentenced to serve five years probation and pay \$2,000 in restitution after pleading guilty to theft of FEMA funds. Williams had been detained on FEMA fraud-related charges since Nov. 1, 2005. Williams is scheduled to appear before a federal judge for a probation violation hearing on Sept. 6, 2006.
- On Aug. 11, 2006, Atari Finley, 26, of Lawton, was sentenced to serve five months in prison followed by 150 days home confinement and three years supervised

release. Finley pled guilty to cashing a Hurricane Katrina disaster relief check and admitted that he knew when he cashed the check that he was not entitled to any disaster relief money because he had never lived at the Louisiana address on his application for FEMA assistance. He was also ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution.

The following were separate cases:

- On May 16, 2006, Jacqueline Marie Sutton, 37, of Lawton, was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution after pleading guilty to filing a false claim for FEMA funds.
- On Aug. 11, 2006, Ebony Pandora Majors, 28, of Lawton, plead guilty to filing a false claim for FEMA rental assistance. Majors is awaiting sentencing and faces up to one year in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes, such as charity fraud and insurance fraud. This 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 Inspection Service and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by the Oklahoma Economic Crime and Identity Theft Task Force, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Secret Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott E. Williams and Assistant U.S. Attorney Vicki Zemp Behenna.

###