



# Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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**EIGHT ADDITIONAL BAKERSFIELD RESIDENTS CHARGED**  
**WITH FRAUD IN CONNECTION WITH FUNDS INTENDED**  
**FOR VICTIMS OF HURRICANE KATRINA**

*61 Defendants Now Charged*

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that five separate indictments charging eight individuals with participating in a wire fraud scheme to defraud the American Red Cross and Western Union of funds intended for victims of Hurricane Katrina were filed late yesterday. The new defendants are charged as follows:

RONIKA DANYELL SPEARS, 21, was charged in a one count indictment with participating in a scheme to defraud the Red Cross and Western Union of hurricane relief funds.

CHERRI LYNN BROWN, 29, was charged in a one count indictment with participating in a scheme to defraud the Red Cross and Western Union of hurricane relief funds.

ULYSSES JACK PERKINS, 23, was charged in a one count indictment with participating in a scheme to defraud the Red Cross and Western Union of hurricane relief funds. The defendant was an employee of the Red Cross Call Center in Bakersfield.

KATHY ANN HOLLIS, 38, RICHARD EUGENE RAYMOND, 35, and PHILLIP ANTHONY WYATT, 31, were charged in a two-indictment with participating in a scheme to defraud the Red Cross and Western Union of hurricane relief funds.

ATIFFA GUADALUPE DUNBAR, 26, and CHERYL L. TATEVEASAY, aka Cheryl Tate, 53, were charged in a two-count indictment with participating in a scheme to defraud the Red Cross and Western Union of hurricane relief funds. ATIFFA DUNBAR was also charged in four separate counts with fraud associated with a false FEMA claim she had filed.

All of these cases are being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Bakersfield, California. The FEMA cases are being investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General.

United States Attorney Scott noted that 61 defendants have been charged in the Eastern District of California since October 2005, and that 25 of those individuals have pled guilty to felony offenses. Mr. Scott stated, "Our investigation continues, with more arrests anticipated. It is vital that funds earmarked for the victims of Hurricane Katrina reach those still in need of assistance, rather individuals who have the audacity to steal them."

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, 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 Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, and the Federal Trade Commission, among others.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Stanley A. Boone, who is prosecuting the cases, the indictments allege that the defendants participated in a plan or scheme to defraud the Red Cross by submitting or causing others to submit a fraudulent claim through the Red Cross call center located in Bakersfield, California. The indictments explain that the Red Cross, in an attempt to expedite payments to actual victims of Hurricane Katrina, has set up at least two call centers in the United States, the largest of which is located in Bakersfield. According to the indictments, when a person contacts the call center to request assistance, their personal information, including an address within the area affected by the hurricane, is verified by call center employees. Once that information is verified, the caller is provided instructions on how to obtain financial assistance from the Red Cross. Once assistance is approved, a victim is given instructions on how to obtain that assistance at their closest Western Union branch.

Ms. DUNBAR is also charged with four additional counts of mail fraud and false claims associated with defrauding FEMA of over \$12,000. The defendant claimed to FEMA that she resided in Louisiana and received substantial personal property damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. At the time of the disaster, Ms. DUNBAR was a resident of Bakersfield, California.

The charged wire and mail fraud counts for each defendant carry a maximum of 20 years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine. The false claims counts each carry a maximum sentence of 5 years and/or a \$250,000 fine.

The charges are only allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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