

U.S. Attorney's Office

DISTRICT OF MARYLAND PRESS BLOG

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FORMER NASA EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR THEFT OF SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION AND NASA FUNDS

Andrea D. Harrison, age 38, formerly of Towson, Maryland was sentenced today to 18 months in prison and 12 months of home detention on electronic monitoring, followed by 3 years of supervised release for mail and wire fraud, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein. U.S. District Judge Richard D. Bennett also ordered Harrison to pay restitution in the amount of \$247,284.48.

According to the statement of facts presented to the court on September 26, 2005, as part of her plea agreement, 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, 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.

Co-defendant Franklin G. Thomas, age 35, of Baltimore worked for the Social Security Administration (SSA) as a benefit authorizer in Woodlawn, Maryland. Thomas processed payments of SSA funds to legal representatives of Social Security claimants. Thomas performed no work for and provided no goods or services to NASA.

From 1996-2005, Harrison prepared a series of NASA purchase orders payable to some variation of "The Franklin Thomas Group." Harrison subsequently certified that services or goods had been received from "The Franklin Thomas Group," and assisted Thomas in providing the documentation required by NASA to process

payment. As a result of the fraudulent representations and documentation provided by Harrison and Thomas, wire transfers in the total amount of \$194,749.98 were sent from the United States Treasury to Thomas's personal bank account. Thomas and Harrison shared in the proceeds.

During 2004-2005, Thomas processed 11 SSA payments to Harrison. Using a manual override computer function, Thomas instructed the SSA system to make payments to "Andrea Harrison, attorney for [claimant]." Harrison is not licensed to practice law and did not represent any claimants before the SSA. As a result of the computer entries by Thomas, checks totaling \$52,534.50 were mailed via the United States Postal Service to Andrea Harrison at her home address. Harrison cashed and/or deposited those checks at her personal banks and shared the proceeds with Thomas.

The total amount of the loss to the government was \$247,284.48.

On December 19, 2005, Thomas was sentenced to 18 months in prison followed by 12 months of home detention on electronic monitoring for mail and wire fraud. Judge Bennett also ordered that the home detention be included as part of 3 years of supervised release following the prison sentence and ordered Thomas to pay restitution in the amount of \$247,284.48.