



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney David R. Dugas  
Middle District of Louisiana

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**FOUR MORE SENTENCED AND TWO MORE INDICTED  
ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that four more Louisiana residents have been sentenced and two more indicted this week on fraud charges related to hurricane disaster relief programs.

SHAWANDA R. JOHNSON, age 35, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady yesterday to a term of imprisonment of five months on each of two counts and \$2,000 in restitution. After JOHNSON completes her term of imprisonment, she will be placed on supervised release for a period of three years. JOHNSON had been indicted in June of 2007 in a two-count indictment alleging that on September 15, 2005, JOHNSON filed a false and fraudulent application for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits in which she falsely claimed that she was living in New Orleans at the time of the storm. The indictment charged JOHNSON with one count of mail fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1341, and one count of making a false and fraudulent claim for FEMA disaster assistance benefits, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 287. She pled guilty to the indictment on August 15, 2007. The case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General.

STEPHANIE JACKSON, age 37, of Baton Rouge, was also sentenced by Judge Brady yesterday to a term of probation of two years and \$1,216.52 in restitution. JACKSON had been indicted on May 24, 2007, and charged with making a false claim for disaster assistance benefits and illegal conversion of government property. On August 29, 2007, after a jury trial, JACKSON was convicted of both counts. The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

LORETTA J. RUSSELL, age 49, of Baton Rouge, was sentenced by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson yesterday to a term of probation of two years and \$2,000 in restitution. RUSSELL pled guilty in August of 2007 to making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits. In the parties' plea agreement, RUSSELL admitted that on or about September 22, 2005, having already submitted an application for FEMA benefits in her own name, she submitted a second application, this time fraudulently posing as another individual and falsely claiming that he had suffered storm-related damage. The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General.

FREDRICA L. EHIOBO, age 21, of Baton Rouge, was sentenced by Senior U.S. District Court Judge John V. Parker today on Hurricane Katrina-related fraud charges. EHIOBO pled guilty in June of 2007 to making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits. In the parties' plea agreement, EHIOBO admitted that on or about September 15, 2005, she submitted a fraudulent application for FEMA benefits in which she falsely claimed that she had been living in New Orleans, Louisiana at the time of the storm. She was sentenced today to a term of probation of three years and \$2,000 in restitution. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General.

Finally, on February 20, 2008, a federal grand jury returned indictments against MARY A. ROBERTSON, age 33, of Plaquemine, Louisiana, and CASSANDRA A. BELL, age 24, of Baton Rouge. ROBERTSON was charged with five counts of mail fraud. The indictment alleges that ROBERTSON filed a fraudulent application for FEMA benefits and caused FEMA to disburse five disaster assistance benefit checks totaling more than \$25,000. The case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the Social Security Administration. If convicted, ROBERTSON faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count.

BELL is charged with one count of mail fraud (Count One) and one count of making a false claim (Count Two). The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. If convicted on Count One, BELL faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. If convicted on Count Two, BELL faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred thirty-eight.

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](mailto: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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