



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Daniel G. Bogden
District of Nevada

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CONTACT: NATALIE COLLINS
TEL: (702) 388-6336
FAX: (702) 388-6296

LAS VEGAS MAN CHARGED WITH PRESENTING FALSE CLAIM FOR HURRICANE KATRINA BENEFITS

LAS VEGAS - - A Las Vegas man was indicted today by the Federal Grand Jury for making a false claim to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in order to obtain federal disaster assistance benefits designated for Hurricane Katrina evacuees, announced Daniel G. Bogden, United States Attorney for the District of Nevada.

MICHAEL SCOTT HAWK, age 44, of Las Vegas, is charged with one count of Presenting False, Fictitious, and Fraudulent Claims to a Government Agency, a felony offense. According to the Indictment, on November 18, 2005, HAWK allegedly made and presented to FEMA a claim for funds for individuals displaced by Hurricane Katrina, claiming home damage and essential need for food, clothing and shelter, knowing that the claim was false, fictitious and fraudulent, in that he was not an individual displaced by Hurricane Katrina, nor had he been a resident of or resided in Louisiana at the time Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005.

Following Hurricane Katrina, FEMA contracted through the American Red Cross and Corporate Lodging Consultants to provide hotel rooms for persons displaced by the Hurricane. These rooms were provided at no charge to evacuees in various cities across the United States, including Las Vegas, Nevada. The only requirement for an individual to obtain such a room was for he or she to have been displaced from an area affected by Hurricane Katrina. Once the claim was made, the victims were assigned a FEMA claim number.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General Investigators determined that in November and December 2005, **HAWK**, claiming to have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina, obtained rooms at seven different hotels along the Boulder Highway Corridor in Las Vegas. Hawk did not stay in the rooms and instead, re-rented them to other individuals for the believed purposes of narcotics sales and prostitution. The hotels included the Barcelona Hotel and Casino, Nevada Palace Hotel and Casino, Extended Stay America, Arizona Charlie's Casino East, and Palace Hotel. Some of the rooms were rented under the name "Michael Burn." Investigators determined from FEMA documentation that **HAWK'S** FEMA claim number had been used to secure the rooms under the name "Michael Burn." Investigators also determined that **HAWK** had several residences in Nevada since approximately 2002, but none in Louisiana.

HAWK was arrested and appeared before a U.S. Magistrate Judge on April 12, 2006, and was detained pending trial. If convicted, he faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The case is being investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Karyn Kenny.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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