



PRESS RELEASE

**Office of the
United States Attorney
Middle District of Alabama
Leura Garrett Canary**

THIRD SET OF HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUD CASES INDICTED

Leura G. Canary, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Alabama, announced that on January 20, 2006, a federal grand jury returned separate indictments against the following Montgomery residents:

Judy F. Washington, age 32
Keith Jamal Washington, age 31.

Both individuals are charged with fraudulently obtaining disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The indictment alleges that both defendants submitted applications for benefits to FEMA claiming that they had suffered damage to property they rented as their primary residence in Louisiana. The indictment further alleges that, in fact, the defendants lived in Montgomery, not Louisiana, and did not suffer the losses claimed. As a result of the alleged false claims, Keith Washington and Judy Washington each received a benefit check for \$2,000. (The Washingtons are not related.)

Both are charged with one count of theft of government property, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 641. Each count carries a statutory maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment.

Both of the defendants surrendered to the U. S. Marshal at the end of last week and initial appearances were held soon thereafter, at which point both were released on bail. Trial was set for both on June 5, 2006.

The cases were investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. The cases will be prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher A. Snyder.

This is the third set of Katrina related fraud cases that have been indicted in this district. In total, nine indictments have been returned from various grand juries in the Middle District.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains only charges. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.