



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Leura G. Canary  
Middle District of Alabama

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## **FOURTEEN MORE INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED FOR HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA FRAUD IN THE MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, AREA**

### *Total Number Arrested Nears 40*

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.**— A federal Grand Jury in Montgomery, Alabama, has returned indictments against fourteen individuals for fraud and theft resulting from false claims filed with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, U.S. Attorney Leura Canary announced today.

“Each of these fourteen defendants is charged with consciously setting out to take money meant for Hurricane Katrina and Rita victims; many of them compounded the harm by stealing others’ identities to do so,” U.S. Attorney Canary stated during a press conference this afternoon. “In total our office has now charged 32 cases involving 37 defendants based upon this type of wrongdoing. We are committed to continuing our efforts to bring these offenders to justice.”

The most recent cases were investigated by U.S. Attorney Canary’s local Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force. The Middle District’s task force is comprised of members coming from the Middle District’s U.S. Attorney’s Office; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General; the United States Postal Inspection Service; the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General; the United States Secret Service; and the Alabama Attorney General’s Office.

The collaborative efforts of these agencies have resulted most recently in indictments against the following individuals:

- Monique Canidate, 29, of Montgomery, Ala. Canidate has been charged with theft of government property or money and aggravated identity theft. The indictment alleges that Canidate filed an application using a false social security number and falsely representing that she suffered losses to a property rented as her primary residence in Metairie, Louisiana. Per the indictment, Canidate received and cashed \$4,235 in FEMA funds on the basis of her fraudulent application.

- Keith Curry, 36, of Montgomery, Ala. Curry has been charged with theft of government property or money. The indictment charges that Curry received and cashed a \$2,000 Katrina disaster relief check, knowing that he was not entitled to the money.
- Ronald Irby, 36, of Elba, Ala., and Rose McClain, 40, of Enterprise, Ala. Irby and McClain have been charged with conspiracy to defraud the United States in relation to a FEMA disaster assistance application. Both are also charged with four counts of theft of government property. According to the indictment, Irby and McClain agreed to engage in a scheme to unlawfully receive and cash Hurricane Katrina disaster checks. The indictment charges them with the theft of approximately \$16,761.23 in FEMA funds intended for victims of Hurricane Katrina.
- Cokey Lee, 31, of Montgomery, Ala. The indictment charges that Lee filed two different claims for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance and that, in each, Lee used false identities and false social security numbers. The indictment further charges that, based upon his fraudulent applications, Lee received and cashed \$8,155 in U.S. Treasury checks. Lee has been charged with four counts of theft of government property or money and one count of aggravated identity theft.
- Shantel M. Robinson, 30, and Catorie V. Anderson, 30, both of Montgomery, Ala., and Terrance M. Kirksey, 31, of Prattville, Ala. The defendants are charged with one count of conspiracy and three counts of theft of FEMA funds. The indictment alleges that Robinson, Anderson, and Kirksey agreed to engage in a scheme to unlawfully receive and cash Hurricane Katrina disaster checks. It also alleges that they did indeed receive three FEMA disaster assistance relief checks in the amount of \$6,358. The indictment charges that Anderson, Kirksey, and Robinson received and cashed the checks in Montgomery, Ala., knowing that they were not entitled to the funds.
- Josephine Hamilton, 48, of Montgomery, Ala. Hamilton has been charged with stealing \$2,000 in federal FEMA funds intended for victims of Hurricane Katrina. The indictment charges that Hamilton, who did not live in a disaster area during the Hurricane, received the check and cashed it, knowing that she was not entitled to the money.
- Timothy D. Thomas, 28, of Montgomery, Ala. Thomas has been charged with theft of \$4,955.88 in FEMA disaster assistance funds intended for victims of Hurricane Katrina. According to the indictment, Thomas's application claimed that he rented an apartment in New Orleans, Louisiana, when in fact he did not. The indictment further charges that Thomas received two U.S. Treasury checks for disaster-related relief and that he cashed the checks knowing that he was not entitled to the money.

- Elizabeth Grandville, 27, of Montgomery, Ala. Grandville has been charged with theft of government property or money and aggravated identity theft. According to the indictment, Grandville filed an application with FEMA for disaster benefits in connection with Hurricane Katrina, using a false social security number. The indictment charges that Grandville's application falsely represented that she suffered losses to a property rented as her primary residence in New Orleans, Louisiana, when, in fact, Grandville did not live in New Orleans or suffer the losses claimed. The indictment charges that Grandville received a check in the amount of \$2,358, which she cashed knowing she was not entitled to the funds.
- Willie Daniel, 58, of Montgomery, Ala. Daniel has been charged with theft of government property or money. According to the indictment, Daniel received and cashed a \$2,000 check intended for Katrina victims, knowing that he was not entitled to the money.
- Curnel Gordon, 59, of Montgomery, Ala. Gordon has been charged with theft of government property or money and possession of less than five grams of crack cocaine. The indictment charges that Gordon unlawfully received and cashed a \$2,000 FEMA expedited assistance check. The indictment also charges that Gordon was later found possessing crack cocaine.
- Nakasha Woods, 23, of Montgomery, Ala. Woods has been charged with theft of government property or money. Based upon the indictment, Woods unlawfully received and cashed a \$2,000 Katrina disaster relief check, knowing that she was not entitled to this money.

These defendants were arrested in a joint two-day operation with the U.S. Marshals Service last week. All of these defendants have been arraigned, and their cases will be set for trial at later dates. Several other defendants indicted remain at large and will be arrested in the near future.

"These indictments reflect the continued hard work of the Hurricane Katrina Task Force and their investigations of fraud and theft of disaster relief funds provided by FEMA," states Special Agent in Charge Roy D. Sexton of the U.S. Secret Service. "We follow a zero tolerance policy regarding theft of taxpayer dollars; therefore, we intend to fully investigate and present the evidence of fraud and theft for prosecution of the person or persons who perpetrated it."

Roland Maye, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Atlanta Division, added that his Agency welcomed this collaborative effort to work with other Federal and State law enforcement agencies to identify, arrest, and prosecute those who are perpetrating frauds at the expense of the Federal Government and the victims of natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

Finally, Martin Phanco, Inspector in Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, added, "The United States Postal Inspection Service is committed to investigating these types of cases in an effort to protect the public and the nation's mail system from criminal attack and misuse. This is just another fine example of how committed the U.S. Postal Inspection Service is to fighting fraud and to bringing those criminals responsible for committing these deceitful acts to justice."

The Middle District's task force is a subpart of a national Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force established by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in September 2005 to deter, detect, investigate, and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes. The national task force, chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of DOJ's Criminal Division, is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, and United States Attorneys' Offices from the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher A. Snyder is leading the Middle District's task force in its efforts to track down, investigate and prosecute disaster-related crimes in the Middle District. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Snyder, Kent Brunson, Susan Redmond, Nathan Stump, Jerusha Adams, and Matthew Shepherd are prosecuting the above-referenced cases on behalf of the U.S. Government.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the Department of Homeland Security Office or the Inspector General Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721.

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