



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Dunn Lampton Southern District of Mississippi

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20 PEOPLE CHARGED WITH KATRINA FRAUD INCLUDING ONE CLAIM MADE FROM PRISON

United States Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today the indictments of 20 individuals charging them with fraudulent acts relating to Hurricane Katrina. Those charged are:

TOMMY BINGHAM who falsely claimed to have lived in Biloxi when Katrina hit the Coast. BINGHAM was actually incarcerated at the Bureau of Prisons facility at Yazoo City on the day Katrina hit. BINGHAM received over \$4300 from FEMA and if convicted faces a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine;

THOMAS VU of Biloxi, KIMBERLY RIDER of Perkinston, TOAN M. BUI of Biloxi, SHERA SIMS of Gulfport, JAMILA A. BROWN of Jackson, K'HARI GOWDY of Picayune, and SHELBY M. O'CONNER of Gulfport have been charged - as the result of an investigation conducted by the Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General - with making false statements to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security to receive disaster unemployment benefits. If convicted, VU, RIDER, BUI, SIMS, BROWN, and GOWDY face a maximum of 10 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine. O'CONNER faces a maximum of one year in prison and a \$100,000 fine;

MICHAEL CHAPMAN of Biloxi, ROY LOFTON of Gulfport, HILLARY WILD of Picayune, LAWRENCE CREED of Biloxi are charged with making false statements, false claims, and with schemes to defraud FEMA by falsely claiming loss of a home in which they did not live at the time of Katrina. If convicted, CHAPMAN and CREED face a maximum of 50 years in prison and a \$1 million fine; LOFTON faces 70 years in prison and a \$1.25 million fine; WILD faces a maximum of 95 years in prison and a \$1.75 million fine;

STEPHANIE FONTAN and STEPHEN FONTAN of Morton, and MARION GRIFFIN and GLENDA STADLER of Morton have been charged with Conspiracy to defraud FEMA as well as a number of counts of making false statement to FEMA and stealing, purloining and converting FEMA funds to which they were not entitled. These defendants used multiple false addresses to file claims with FEMA, receive hurricane relief funds and distribute the proceeds for personal benefit among themselves. If convicted, STEPHANIE FONTAN faces a maximum of 50 years in prison and a \$2.5 million fine. STEPHEN FONTAN, GRIFFIN, and STADLER each face 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine;

EDWIN MALLARD of Gulfport is charged with making false statements to both FEMA and the MS Department of Human Services in order to receive hurricane relief funds and over \$9,000 in Disaster Food Stamp Assistance Funds. MALLARD's charges relate to his having used a false address in making the claims. MALLARD is also charged with Wire Fraud. If convicted, MALLARD faces a maximum of 55 years in prison and a \$1.25 million fine;

DIANNE M. DEAN of Picayune is charged with making a false statement to the U.S. Department of Agriculture on a rural housing service subsidy payment renewal certification and with making a false statement to FEMA for hurricane relief funds. The false statement to FEMA claimed a home in which she did not live at the time of Katrina. If convicted, DEAN faces a maximum of 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine;

HORRIS BERNARD GREEN of Jackson is charged with Wire Fraud in a scheme to defraud the American Red Cross by using and presenting a false Social Security Card and making false statement by claiming he was a resident of New Orleans, LA. If convicted, GREEN faces a maximum of 50 years in prison and a \$1 million fine;

KIMBERLY ANN PETTIGREW of Yazoo City is charged with stealing from the mail and later using 4 different Katrina Disaster Relief EBT cards funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. If convicted, PETTIGREW faces a maximum of 15 years in prison and a \$750,000 fine.

The Honorable Gordon S. Heddell, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor, stated: "Today's arrests send a powerful message to those unscrupulous people who would seek to defraud programs established to aid our fellow Americans in times of need."

"We thank the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Department of Labor, and the entire Katrina Fraud Task force for their work. We will continue to work with the Task Force to investigate and prosecute cases of fraud," said Tommye Dale Favre, MDES Executive Director.

"The number of these Katrina fraud cases continue to build and already hundreds are pending in our office. I have already talked with local district attorneys who have asked to assume some of the mounting caseload. I want to stress that anyone who has information regarding fraudulent use of government monies meant to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina should contact the Department of Homeland Security or the FBI," said U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton.

In September, 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 for the Criminal Division, Alice S. Fisher, includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of

Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

United States Attorney Lampton stressed that these charges represent accusations only and all defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence.

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