



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 24, 2008**

**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
YUSILL SCRIBNER
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL
JANICE OH
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**FORMER EMPLOYEE OF NEW YORK CITY MEDICAL EXAMINER
SENTENCED TO 70 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR THEFT
OF FEDERAL 9/11 FUNDS**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ROSA ABREU -- a former employee of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the City of New York ("OCME") -- was sentenced today to 70 months in prison for her involvement in a scheme to steal millions of dollars, including funds provided to the OCME by the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") to assist in responding to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The sentence was imposed in Manhattan federal court by United States District Judge ROBERT P. PATTERSON. According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

The OCME developed an acute need for computer services following the September 11th attacks, when it was assigned the task of identifying victims through the forensic analysis of body parts and other evidence collected at Ground Zero. Many of the OCME's September 11th-related expenses were reimbursed by FEMA, which provided more than \$46 million to OCME in 2002 and 2003.

ABREU was the OCME's Director of Records and worked as a primary assistant to NATARANJA R. VENKATARAM, the OCME's Director of Management Information Systems ("MIS") and ABREU's co-defendant.

Between 1999 and 2005, VENKATARAM steered more than \$13 million in OCME contracts and purchase orders to three companies run by co-conspirator MUHAMMAD NASEH by advising NASEH how much to bid on OCME contracts and arranging for NASEH's three companies to submit purportedly independent "competing" bids. In the vast majority of cases, NASEH's companies were paid in full under the OCME contracts but did less work than reported, or no

work. Instead, NASEH's companies would transfer funds to other companies, as directed by VENKATARAM, in exchange for a fee. In other cases, NASEH wrote checks according to VENKATARAM's directions, or provided VENKATARAM with signed but otherwise blank checks from the NASEH companies for VENKATARAM to use as he saw fit. ABREU helped VENKATARAM launder the proceeds of this scheme through shell companies that ABREU established and maintained. At VENKATARAM's direction, millions of dollars in funds paid by OCME to NASEH's companies were used for VENKATARAM's and ABREU's personal benefit.

ABREU, 41, of Queens, New York, pleaded guilty before Judge PATTERSON on October 23, 2007 to one count of conspiracy, one count of embezzlement and misapplication of funds from the OCME, and three counts of money laundering. In addition to her prison term, ABREU was ordered to pay restitution and forfeiture in the amount of \$1,414,031.

VENKATARAM pleaded guilty on October 30, 2007 to one count of conspiracy, one count of embezzlement and misapplication of funds from OCME, and fourteen counts of money laundering. He was sentenced on July 11, 2008 to 15 years in prison and ordered to pay restitution and forfeiture in the amount of \$2,970,072.

NASEH pleaded guilty on December 12, 2006 to one count of conspiracy, one count of embezzlement and misapplication of funds from the OCME, one count of bribery, and two counts of money laundering. He is awaiting sentencing.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of the New York City Department of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys ANDREW S. DEMBER and ARLO DEVLIN-BROWN are in charge of the prosecution.

08-275

###