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**UNITED STATES CHARGES NEW JERSEY MAN WITH THE LARGEST
EVER FRAUD AGAINST THE SEPTEMBER 11TH FUND**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and GLENN A. FINE, Inspector General of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), announced the unsealing of an Indictment charging MARIO MASTELLONE, of East Windsor, New Jersey, with, among other things, defrauding the United States Department of Justice September 11 Victim Compensation Fund of 2001 (September 11th Fund) of over one million dollars. Measured by the amount of money he obtained, MASTELLONE's is the largest fraud ever perpetrated against the September 11th Fund.

The September 11th Fund was set up in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to compensate people who were injured in the attacks and relatives of the deceased, and is administered by the United States Department of Justice.

As set forth in the Indictment, MASTELLONE fraudulently obtained approximately \$1,076,789 from the September 11th Fund based on two sets of false claims: first, that he has not worked since September 11, 2001; and second, that he was permanently disabled as a result of injuries sustained on 9/11. In addition, according to the Indictment, MASTELLONE sought 9/11-related compensation from other entities, such as the New York State Workers' Compensation Board and the Painting Industry Insurance Fund, based on the false claim that he had not worked since September 11, 2001. Finally, as charged in the Indictment, MASTELLONE lied to a Department of Justice agent investigating his fraud, and lied to a Department of Justice hearing officer evaluating his claim for compensation.

The Indictment also announces the Government's intention to seek criminal forfeiture of more than one million dollars from MASTELLONE.

If convicted, MASTELLONE, age 39, faces a maximum of 40 years in prison. He will be arraigned this afternoon in Manhattan federal court before United States Magistrate Judge MICHAEL H. DOLINGER.

Mr. FINE said: "Any individual who attempts to corruptly profit from a disaster such as the September 11 attacks deserves to be held accountable. We will continue to work with the U.S. Attorney's Office to ensure that those who perpetrate such crimes are investigated and prosecuted."

"Bilking the September 11 Fund is a gross attempt to profit from a monumental tragedy," stated Mr. GARCIA. "It is not only a fraud on the government and other entities that fund the compensation programs, but also a grave disservice to the thousands of genuine victims of the September 11th attacks."

Mr. GARCIA thanked The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General for their investigation of this case.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Assistant United States Attorney MICHAEL FARBIARZ is in charge of the criminal prosecution.

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