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**THREE MISSISSIPPIANS ARRESTED FOR
POST HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUD**

United States Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today the arrest of three individuals for making false claims to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) for hurricane relief funds. On October 4, 2005, criminal complaints were filed against the following Mississippi residents: Bryan Michael Beets of Vicksburg, Markqus Antonio Brown of Meridian, and Henry Jerome Armstrong of Meridian. Two other individuals have also been charged with making false claims to FEMA, but those individuals have not yet been apprehended.

These arrests are the results of joint investigations conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service with assistance provided by the U.S. Marshal and the Meridian Police Department. According to the affidavits filed in support of the charges, the individuals each submitted a claim for disaster relief, falsely claiming that they had lived in a home or apartment that received damage, listing an address where the individuals did not live at the time of Hurricane Katrina. The maximum penalty for making fraudulent claims for relief funds is 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

United States Attorney Dunn Lampton said, “Disasters such as this bring out the best and the worst in people. It is reprehensible to know that people who had no damage from Hurricane Katrina

would engage in obvious illegal activity to fraudulently obtain hurricane relief money. Sadly, the people committing these crimes are taking money away from the real victims of the hurricane.”

In September, 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the 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 Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, 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 was formed. Recognizing the significance of this event, nineteen (19) federal and state law enforcement agencies have come together to jointly pursue and prosecute individuals who file false and fraudulent claims. Members of the local task force include the U.S. Attorney’s Office, U.S. Marshal Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division, Postal Inspection Service, Secret Service, Department of Treasury - Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Office of Inspector General, Department of Army - Criminal Investigative Division, U.S. Health and Human Services - Office of Inspector General, U.S. Housing and Urban Development - Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration - Office of Inspector General, Mississippi State Attorney General’s Office, Mississippi State Auditor’s Office, Mississippi Department of Public Safety, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, and the Mississippi Insurance Commissioner’s Office. The joint task force will also be working with county and local law enforcement in this effort.

Additionally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has recently requested additional agents,

including a supervisory agent, to be assigned to their Hattiesburg resident office to meet the increased demand for criminal investigations into false and fraudulent claims.

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.

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