



U.S. Department of Justice

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LITTLE ROCK WOMAN CHARGED WITH FEMA FRAUD

Little Rock, AR - Bud Cummins, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas announced that **Zebralon A. Dukes-Oliver** was charged with wire fraud on a criminal complaint yesterday afternoon. A motion was filed today requesting that a summons be issued for Dukes-Oliver to appear in Federal Court.

The charge is the result of an investigation into allegations that Dukes-Oliver falsely reported information on a request for hurricane disaster aid in order to qualify for disaster relief payments by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). According to the affidavit filed in Federal Court, FEMA made a wire transfer of \$2,000 to an account in Dukes-Oliver's name after processing the application. She later withdrew the funds from the account. The investigation was conducted by the USSS and FEMA as part of the Hurricane Fraud Task Force. If convicted, she could receive a sentence of up to 20 years imprisonment in a federal prison and/or a \$250,000 under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines.

"Investigations are on-going of persons who seek to illegally benefit from the hurricane disaster relief efforts. It is an unconscionable crime against all Americans. We will aggressively

prosecute those criminals who lie, cheat, and steal resources from people legitimately deserving of relief due to the hurricanes” said Cummins.

As the rebuilding begins, preventing and prosecuting hurricane-related fraud is a top priority of the Department of Justice. 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 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 the United States Attorneys, among others. The Task Force is partnering with state and local law enforcement agencies and groups such as the American Red Cross to track and refer any cases of fraud arising from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Several government websites are available to obtain information about, and report instances of hurricane-related fraud. The FBI website, www.fbi.gov contains updated alerts about particular types of charity-related frauds. Members of the public can also report instances of fraud on the website for the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov. The Federal Trade Commission has a toll-free hotline, 1-877-FTC-HELP which also allows consumers to report suspected fraud schemes.

An indictment is an allegation of criminal wrongdoing. A person so charged is presumed innocent unless and until they are found guilty in a court of law.

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