



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney David R. Dugas  
Middle District of Louisiana

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## **ANOTHER INDICTED, TWO MORE SENTENCED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today that another Louisiana resident has been indicted and two more have been sentenced on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program.

COURTNEY N. STEPTER, age 22, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment with mail fraud (Count One) and making a false claim with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits (Count Two). The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. If convicted on Count One, STEPTER faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. If convicted on Count Two, STEPTER faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

ALVIN LEE JOHNSON, age 47, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on October 29, 2007, to Count One of an indictment charging him with mail fraud. JOHNSON was sentenced today by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson to a term of imprisonment of twenty-one months (to be served after JOHNSON completes a state sentence he is currently serving), \$2,000.00 in restitution, and three years of supervised release following his imprisonment. The case was investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service with assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General.

IYANA P. NICHOLS, age 31, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on August 16, 2007, to Count One of an indictment charging her with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits. NICHOLS was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to a term of probation of five years and \$29,680.24 in restitution. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Today's indictment brings the total number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds to one hundred fifty-two.

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 the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret

Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at [HKFTF@leo.gov](mailto:HKFTF@leo.gov) or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

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