



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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TWO MORE SENTENCED, ANOTHER PLEADS GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – Two more Louisiana residents were sentenced and another pled guilty in federal court on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today.

ROBIN BECNEL, age 44, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on December 6, 2006, to an indictment charging her with illegal conversion of government property, that is, a check from FEMA for expedited disaster assistance. BECNEL was sentenced today by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson to three years of probation and \$2,000 in restitution. The U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

REGMOND D. RIDGELY, age 39, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on April 2, 2007, to Count Two of an indictment charging him with making a false claim for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits. RIDGELY was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady to three years of probation and \$2,000 in restitution. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

LATASHA D. MALOID, age 26, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty today before U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady to Count One of an indictment charging her with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits. The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. As a result of her guilty plea to Count One, MALOID faces a maximum sentence of five (5) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. As part of the plea agreement, the U.S. Attorney's Office will dismiss Count Two of the indictment when MALOID is sentenced on Count One.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred twenty-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 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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