



Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas

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HOUSTON MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR DEFRAUDING FEMA IN CONNECTION WITH HURRICANE RITA

(HOUSTON) - James T. Leggett, 32, of Houston, has been sentenced to seven months imprisonment for filing a fraudulent disaster assistance claim with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita, United States Attorney Tim Johnson announced today.

Hurricane Rita made landfall on the Texas Gulf Coast on Sept. 23, 2005. On Oct. 6, 2005, Leggett filed a disaster assistance claim with the FEMA in which he claimed to have been displaced from his primary residence on the 4000 block of Watonga Blvd. in Houston, which he alleged had suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Rita. The investigation conducted by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General (DHS-OIG) and the Federal Protective Service (FPS) revealed the defendant did not reside at the damaged address at the time of Hurricane Rita, but instead he and his property had been evicted from that location on Sept. 12, 2005 - approximately two weeks prior to the storm. The investigation also revealed that Hurricane Rita did not damage the apartment complex at that location. As a result of the defendant's false disaster assistance claim the defendant received approximately \$13,276 in the form of either direct payments from FEMA or indirect rental assistance payments by FEMA to the City of Houston for the defendant's claimed lodging expenses in the aftermath of the storm.

At this morning's hearing, United States District Judge Kenneth M. Hoyt sentenced Leggett to seven months imprisonment, a three-year-term of supervised release and restitution to FEMA in the amount of \$13,276.

This case was investigated by DHS-OIG and the FPS and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jason Varnado.

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