



Department of Justice

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ANOTHER SENTENCED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that another Louisiana resident was sentenced in federal court yesterday on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program.

TOMIKIA M. BLANCHARD, age 27, of New Orleans, Louisiana, pled guilty on January 31, 2008, to Counts One and Two of an indictment charging her with bank fraud (Count One) and passing a forged United States Treasury check (Count Two). The United States alleged in the indictment and the defendant admitted that she stole a check for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance, valued at more than \$5,000, forged the intended recipient's endorsement on the back of the check, and deposited the check into her personal bank account. BLANCHARD was sentenced on September 23, 2008, by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to a term of imprisonment of four months, five years of supervised release after her imprisonment, and \$5,060.07 in restitution. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service conducted the investigation of this matter.

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 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 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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