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For Immediate Release
August 25, 2006

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CORRECTIONAL OFFICER INDICTED FOR FEMA FRAUD

Officer employed at United States Penitentiary in Pollock, LA

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that **CICERO PATTERSON, age 45, of Alexandria, Louisiana**, has been indicted by a federal grand jury for claiming to be a hurricane victim in order to fraudulently obtain FEMA relief funds.

The indictment charges PATTERSON, a correctional officer at the United States Penitentiary in Pollock, Louisiana, with three counts of wire fraud and one count of theft of public funds. The indictment alleges that in September 2005, PATTERSON applied for federal disaster relief, falsely claiming that due to Hurricane Katrina, his primary residence which he was purportedly renting in New Orleans had been damaged and that his automobile had been damaged and could not be driven. PATTERSON also falsely claimed in his application for federal disaster relief that he had lost work due to Hurricane Katrina. Based on the information provided to FEMA, PATTERSON allegedly received a wire transfer in the amount of \$10,391.

The indictment further alleges that in December 2005, PATTERSON falsely informed FEMA that he had spent all or part of the rental assistance which had been provided by FEMA on essential

needs and he lacked sufficient additional funding to address those needs. Based on PATTERSON's request for additional funds from FEMA, he allegedly received a wire transfer of funds from FEMA in the amount of \$2,028.

PATTERSON is scheduled to be arraigned before United States Magistrate Judge James Kirk in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Louisiana on August 30, 2006 at 10:30 a.m.

If convicted, PATTERSON faces a maximum of 20 years on the charge of wire fraud, 10 years in prison on the charge of theft, and a \$250,000 fine.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Defendants are entitled to a presumption of innocence under the law, and the government has the burden of proving every element of the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General. This individual brings the total to 32 defendants who have been charged in the Western District of Louisiana with violations related to FEMA relief funds.

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 members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Allison D. Bushnell and Alexander C. Van Hook.

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