



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

*United States Attorney Donald W. Washington
Western District of Louisiana*

United States Courthouse • 300 Fannin Street, Suite 3201 • Shreveport, Louisiana 71101-3068 • (318) 676-3600
United States Courthouse • 800 Lafayette Street, Suite 2200 • Lafayette, Louisiana 70501-7206 • (337) 262-6618

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Contact: Donald W. Washington (337-262-6618)
William J. Flanagan (318-676-3600)

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RUSTON CONTRACTOR PLEADS GUILTY TO TAX EVASION IN FEDERAL COURT

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that **RANDY L. BRANCH**, age 51, of Ruston, Louisiana, entered a guilty plea to Tax Evasion before U.S. District Judge Donald Walter on May 19, 2009 in Shreveport. During the guilty plea hearing an IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent testified that BRANCH evaded taxes owed the United States for the tax years 1997 through 2004 by failing to file tax returns as required by law, by conducting his construction business using cash transactions and by structuring his financial transactions to avoid the requirement to file federal cash transaction reports. BRANCH admitted to cashing various business income checks and paid the majority of his business expenses in cash in order to avoid his taxes and to conceal, and attempt to conceal, his true income from the IRS. BRANCH failed to pay approximately \$579,912 in taxes due the IRS for these tax years. With interest and penalties BRANCH owes the IRS a total of \$914,525.

The maximum penalty of Tax Evasion is imprisonment of five (5) years, a fine of \$100,000 and the costs of prosecution. Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

BRANCH was placed on bond pending his sentencing hearing which is set for August 11, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.

This case was investigated by U.S. Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert W. Gillespie, Jr.

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