



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2008
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GULFPORT MAN ARRAIGNED ON KATRINA FRAUD CHARGES

Gulfport, Miss. – Jason Tallent of Gulfport, Miss., appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert H. Walker in Federal Court today, U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton announced. Tallent was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of making false statements, filing false claims, stealing government money, and mail fraud.

The indictment alleges that Tallent fraudulently applied for and received over \$10,000.00 in various payments from the Federal Emergency Management Agency by falsely representing he rented and resided at a certain address at the time of Hurricane Katrina. Tallent faces a maximum penalty of twenty years in prison and fines of \$250,000.00 for each count. He is scheduled for trial before Senior U.S. District Judge Gex on February 2, 2009.

In September, 2005, former Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Matthew Friedrich, includes members from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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