

NINE DEFENDANTS IN BROWARD COUNTY ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF DEFRAUDING FEMA AFTER HURRICANE FRANCIS

R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida; and Donald J. Balberchak, Special Agent In Charge, Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, Miami Field Office, announced today the arrests of nine (9) defendants in Broward County who defrauded the Federal Emergency Assistance Agency, Department of Homeland Security (FEMA), to obtain disaster assistance after Hurricane Frances last year. Arrested today were defendants: Siandra Lekitia Elick, Jiquana S. Heath, Maryse Dubuisson, Felicia Benita Johnson, Themecia Maria Couch, Lakrisha Rumore Ayden, Tamela Humes, Chenita Arnella Wiggins, and Valerie Rodney. The defendants were separately charged in Indictments with making false, fictitious, and fraudulent claims, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 287. If convicted, the defendants face maximum statutory penalties of 5 years' imprisonment as to each count of making false, fictitious and fraudulent claims.

FEMA was responsible for, among other things, providing disaster assistance to individuals in an area that was declared a major disaster. FEMA was authorized to provide disaster assistance to individuals in the State of Florida to eligible victims of Hurricane Francis, which made landfall on September 5, 2004, near Sewall's Point, Martin County, Florida. FEMA's Individuals and Households Program was a program that provided, among other things, financial assistance to individuals who suffered property losses and damage resulting from Hurricane Frances, which had been declared a major disaster.

Siandra Lekitia Elick is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Elick obtained approximately \$7,832.16 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Jiquana Heath is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Heath obtained approximately \$10,782.29 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Maryse Dubuisson is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Dubuisson obtained approximately \$6,293.03 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Felicia Benita Johnson is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Johnson obtained approximately \$9,476.07 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false

representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Themecia Maria Couch is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Couch obtained approximately \$3,224.41 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Lakrisha Rumore Ayden is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Ayden obtained approximately \$10,234.07 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Tamela Humes is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Humes obtained approximately \$11,109.23 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Chenita Arnella Wiggins is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Wiggins obtained approximately \$7,077.02 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Valerie Rodney is named in a one (1) count Indictment, which charges her with making a false, fictitious, and fraudulent claim. As charged in the Indictment, Rodney obtained approximately \$7,301.09 in FEMA disaster relief assistance, by among other things, making false representations to FEMA that her personal property was damaged as a result of Hurricane Francis.

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Laurie E. Rucoba and Jennifer Keene.

To report suspected FEMA fraud, please call the Hotline at 1-866-720-5721.