

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas Man Facing 30 Years And \$1 Million Fine For Alleged Theft Of FEMA Relief Money

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ST. THOMAS -- United States Attorney Gretchen C.F. Shappert for the District of the Virgin Islands announced today that Teron Stevens, 27, of St. Thomas, was indicted on Friday, June 8, 2018, by a federal grand jury charging him with one count of Disaster Fraud and one count of Wire Fraud, in relation to Hurricane Irma Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster relief funds.

According to the indictment, in September of 2017, Stevens applied to FEMA for disaster relief by falsely claiming to be a homeowner of a property damaged by Hurricane Irma. As a result, Stevens received over \$27,000 in FEMA assistance to which he was not entitled. If convicted, Stevens faces a maximum sentence of not more than 30 years in

prison, and a fine of up to \$1,000,000.

On September 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma struck the United States Virgin Islands. In response, on September 7, 2017, President Donald J. Trump issued a major disaster declaration under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq. (the “Stafford Act”), for the Virgin Islands. As a result of this declaration, FEMA was authorized to provide assistance to affected residents of St. Thomas and St. John through FEMA’s Individuals and Households Program.

This case is part of the United States Attorney’s Disaster Fraud Task Force, which was announced in October 2017. Members of the public who suspect fraud involving disaster relief efforts, or believe they have been the victim of fraud from a person or organization soliciting relief funds on behalf of disaster victims, should contact the National Disaster Fraud Hotline toll free at (866) 720-5721. The telephone line is staffed by a live operator 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also fax information to the Center at (225) 334-4707, or email it to disaster@leo.gov. Learn more about the Department of Justice’s National Center for Disaster Fraud at <http://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud>.

This case is being investigated by the United States Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Meredith J. Edwards and Mervin A. Bourne, Jr.

United States Attorney Shappert reminds the public that an indictment is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty.