

FEMA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR AND DEPUTY INDICTED FOR CONSPIRACY, HONEST SERVICES WIRE FRAUD, DISASTER FRAUD, FALSE STATEMENTS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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On September 10, 2019, a Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) Deputy Regional Administrator and a FEMA Deputy Chief of Staff were indicted along with the former president of Cobra Acquisitions, LLC. The indictment by a federal grand jury in the district of Puerto Rico includes 15 counts of conspiracy to commit bribery, honest services wire fraud, disaster fraud, Travel Act violations, making false statements, wire fraud and conflict of interest, all in connection with disaster recovery work in attempting to restore the power grid in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. The indictment is anchored on the conspiracy to commit bribery based on soliciting and giving things of value to the FEMA Regional administrator to influence his official acts (i.e. to award restoration work to contractor Cobra Acquisitions). To further the conspiracy, defendants used private email accounts, private cell phones, Apple iMessages and SMS texts rather than FEMA issued email or cell phones.

The U.S. Attorney for Puerto Rico stated that “These defendants were supposed to come to Puerto Rico to help during the recovery after the devastation suffered from Hurricane Maria. Instead they decided to take advantage of the precarious condition of our electric power grid and engaged in a bribery and honest services wire fraud scheme in order to enrich themselves illegally. All government officials are entrusted with performing their duties honestly and ethically.”

If found guilty the defendants face possible sentences of up to 5 years for conspiracy, travel action violations, conflict of interest and false statements, and up to 30 years for honest services wire fraud and disaster fraud.

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