



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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FUGITIVES IDENTIFIED AND WELFARE BENEFITS CUT-OFF

HONOLULU-Attorney General Mark Bennett announced that: On November 21, 2003, The Department of Human Services, with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, identified 137 fugitives on public assistance in the State of Hawaii. The termination of their benefits will save the State of Hawaii more than \$803,000. The identified fugitives are wanted in 25 states in connection with felony charges or for parole or probation violations. The underlying offenses included car theft, grand larceny, burglary, drug offenses, child kidnapping, sex offenses and robbery. Last year, 225 fleeing felons on public assistance were identified in the same program and their benefits were terminated saving the government more than \$900,000.

In addition to facing arrest and extradition to the states from which they fled, fugitives who lie about their status in order to obtain welfare benefits are routinely prosecuted in the State of Hawaii for welfare fraud.

On November 21, 2003, Ronney R. Diaz, also known as Anthony John Marciano, also known as Michale Garcia, pled no contest to one count of theft in the first degree for fraudulently obtaining more than \$47,000 in public assistance benefits in the State of Hawaii between 2000 and 2002. Investigation by the Department of Human Services revealed that Mr. Diaz, 32, the father of three children, concealed from the government that he was wanted in the State of California in connection with allegedly fraudulent insurance claims. Investigators discovered that Diaz also concealed his income, and the presence of co-defendant Brandy Lewis, also known as Brandy Diaz, also known as Linda M. Sterio, also known as Nicole Ann Ledesma, also known as Linda Johnson, the mother of the minor children, in the household and her status as a fleeing felon as well. Mr. Diaz was extradited from San Antonio, Texas to Hawaii to answer for this offense.

Theft in the first degree is a class "B" felony punishable by up to ten years in prison and by a fine of up to \$25,000 or twice the pecuniary gain from the crime whichever is greater.

First Circuit Court Judge Sandra A. Simms set sentencing for Ronney Diaz for March 16, 2004.

Co-defendant Brandy Lewis remains a fugitive. Anyone having information concerning her possible whereabouts should call the Investigations Division of the Department of the Attorney General at (808) 586-1240.

Anyone having information concerning welfare fraud should call the Welfare Fraud Hotline at (808) 587-8444.

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