



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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BAKERSFIELD WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

FRESNO, Calif. — Bakersfield resident Louisa Recatune, 45, pleaded guilty today to theft of Social Security benefits, United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced.

According to court documents, between January 2004 and August 2011, Recatune received Social Security survivor benefits from a legitimate social security recipient who had died on December 1, 2003. According to the indictment, Recatune married Robert Navejas on September 4, 2002. At the time of the marriage, she had children unrelated to Navejas. Recatune and Navejas also had no biological children while together. In January 2003, Recatune filed an application for auxiliary benefits on Navejas's SSA record. Recatune sought benefits for herself and her children. Recatune's application was denied, however, because she had not been married to Navejas for long enough. In March 2003, just roughly two months later, Recatune filed paperwork in Kern County Superior Court to end the marriage with Navejas, and in November 2003, Recatune obtained an annulment, effectively terminating the marriage as though it never existed.

According to court documents, on December 1, 2003, Navejas died at his residence in Kern County. On January 14, 2004, following Navejas's death, Recatune filed for survivor benefits for her and her children under Navejas's record, never informing SSA that the marriage was annulled. SSA approved her application and awarded her benefits. Despite her lack of entitlement, Recatune continued to receive the funds and used them for her personal use. During this time, Recatune unlawfully received more than \$239,000.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kirk Sherriff is prosecuting the case.

Recatune is scheduled to be sentenced by Chief United States District Judge Anthony W. Ishii on October 15, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. The maximum statutory penalty for theft of government property is 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and three years of supervised release. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory sentencing factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

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