



Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Michael M. Simpson

Eastern District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2025
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/LAE
X: @EDLANEWS

CONTACT: SHANE M. JONES
PHONE: (504) 680-3111
FAX: (504) 589-4978
EMAIL: shane.jones@usdoj.gov

NEW ORLEANS MAYOR LATOYA CANTRELL AND FORMER NOPD OFFICER JEFFREY VAPPIE INDICTED FOR FRAUD AND OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE

NEW ORLEANS – Acting U.S. Attorney Michael M. Simpson announced that **LATOYA CANTRELL** (“CANTRELL”), age 53, and **JEFFREY PAUL VAPPIE, II** (“VAPPIE”), age 52, both residents of New Orleans, were charged in a superseding indictment today on federal charges concerning wire fraud and obstruction of justice.

CANTRELL and **VAPPIE** were both charged in a conspiracy to commit wire fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371, as well as a conspiracy to obstruct justice, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1512(k). **VAPPIE** is also charged with twelve counts of wire fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1343, and **CANTRELL** is charged in six of those wire fraud counts. **VAPPIE** is charged with making a false statement to the FBI, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001. **CANTRELL** is charged in one count of obstruction of justice, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1512(c)(1), and two counts of making a false declaration before a grand jury, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1623.

According to the allegations contained in the superseding indictment, while **CANTRELL** was Mayor of New Orleans and **VAPPIE** was a New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) officer and member of her executive protection team, **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** developed a personal, intimate relationship as early as October of 2021. From that time until **VAPPIE**’s retirement in June 2024, they embarked on a scheme to defraud the City of New Orleans and NOPD by exploiting **VAPPIE**’s job and **CANTRELL**’s authority as Mayor to have the City and NOPD

pay **VAPPIE**'s salary and expenses during times **VAPPIE** claimed to be on duty but when he was actually engaged in personal activities, often with **CANTRELL**. The allegations contained in the superseding indictment describe the many steps that **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** took to hide their scheme and perpetuate their continued fraud, including using a secure messaging platform, WhatsApp, to exchange over 15,000 messages, pictures, and audio clips in an eight-month period; intimidating subordinates; harassing a citizen; lying to colleagues and associates; deleting evidence; making false statements to FBI agents; giving the grand jury an affidavit signed under oath and penalty of perjury that contained numerous false statements; and, ultimately, committing perjury before a federal grand jury, all for the purpose of distracting and impeding inquiries and investigations, including a federal grand jury investigation.

The superseding indictment alleges that **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** perpetuated their scheme both in New Orleans and during out-of-state trips. In both instances, **VAPPIE**'s activities while claiming to be on duty were conspicuously different than any other member of the Executive Protection Unit. While in New Orleans, they treated a city-owned apartment in the Pontalba as their personal, shared residence and coordinated to spend time together there, engaging in personal activities, while **VAPPIE** claimed to be on duty for EPU and was paid to be doing his job. **CANTRELL** occasionally canceled scheduled work events to facilitate personal and intimate interactions with **VAPPIE** in the Pontalba apartment.

The superseding indictment also alleges that **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** arranged for **VAPPIE** to accompany **CANTRELL** on at least 14 domestic and international trips to maximize their time together and engage in personal activities. In their private text messages, **CANTRELL** characterized trips with **VAPPIE** as "times when we are truly alone" and what "spoils me the most." These trips included trips to San Francisco, which **VAPPIE** and **CANTRELL** decided to extend an extra day so they could visit a series of Napa Valley wineries. While **VAPPIE** was wine tasting, on April 9, 2022, he claimed to work, and was paid for working, a 15-hour day. In August 2022, **CANTRELL** said she would "make it happen" to have **VAPPIE** accompany her on a 3-day trip to Washington, D.C., a trip that they both agreed that they "needed." Shortly after they returned, **VAPPIE** described the trip to **CANTRELL** as "another leg on our journey" as he declared his love for her and their physical relationship. In total, the City of New Orleans paid over \$70,000 for **VAPPIE**'s travel on these trips.

When asked about her reason for bringing members of the Executive Protection Unit with her on out-of-state trips, a practice **CANTRELL** began about five months after **VAPPIE** joined EPU, she justified it as a "pivot" due to COVID and a matter of "safety." At the same time, however, she continued to take out-of-state trips without protection. In fact, on the same day she gave one such statement, she canceled a work trip to Miami, and traveled alone—by plane, then bus, and then ferry—to the island of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts to spend time with **VAPPIE** while he attended a conference paid for by the City of New Orleans related to his position on the HANO Board of Commissioners—a position to which **CANTRELL** appointed him a few months earlier. On other occasions, when **VAPPIE** was unavailable to accompany

CANTRELL on a trip, **CANTRELL** decided not to take another member of Executive Protection.

The superseding indictment alleges that both **VAPPIE** and **CANTRELL** were aware their conduct broke criminal laws. For instance, in April 2022, an associate told **CANTRELL** explicitly in multiple text messages that spending public funds and using public resources for her personal relationship was a “felony.” When **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** learned that the news media was investigating their time together in the Pontalba, they agreed to “be straight and together.” Days after the first news stories broke, in November 2022, **VAPPIE** conducted numerous online searches for New Orleans-area attorneys who specialize in the practice of criminal law, and he researched WhatsApp’s security features. But the defendants’ wire fraud scheme nevertheless continued until **VAPPIE**’s retirement in June 2024.

As alleged in the superseding indictment, in July 2023, the grand jury issued subpoenas to both **VAPPIE** and **CANTRELL** compelling the production of records. The FBI also interviewed **VAPPIE**. During the interview, **VAPPIE** lied about the nature and circumstances of his relationship. In response to the subpoena, **CANTRELL** produced a selection of responsive records, but none of the over 15,000 WhatsApp messages she exchanged with **VAPPIE**. **CANTRELL** also created an affidavit, sworn under oath, that she had activated a feature that automatically deleted messages in 2021. **CANTRELL** submitted a screen shot of her iPhone, showing that WhatsApp messages were set to delete in 24 hours. In fact, **CANTRELL** did not turn on that feature until December 26, 2022, roughly one month after the news media began speculating on her conduct, **VAPPIE** conducted online searches concerning WhatsApp and its security level, and by which time several people had warned **VAPPIE** and **CANTRELL** that their conduct was illegal. This “disappearing messages” feature, moreover, only applied to new messages. During roughly this same period, **CANTRELL** also manually deleted thousands of her prior WhatsApp messages with **VAPPIE**. As alleged, even at the time **CANTRELL** responded to the grand jury subpoena, she still possessed more than 50 pictures, including screen shots of correspondence with **VAPPIE**, that were responsive to the subpoena, but which she nevertheless concealed from the grand jury.

The superseding indictment further alleges that **VAPPIE** and **CANTRELL** continued their pattern of obstruction through the rest of 2023 and 2024. This included improperly pressuring the Interim Superintendent of NOPD to overrule findings of an internal investigation into **VAPPIE**’s conduct. When the Interim Superintendent did not heed that directive, **CANTRELL** ordered the Interim Superintendent to nevertheless reassign **VAPPIE** back to her protection detail. Months later, in a meeting **VAPPIE** attended, **CANTRELL** informed the Interim Superintendent that the Interim Superintendent would be replaced. Similarly, when a private citizen took pictures of **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** together in public, dining and consuming alcohol al fresco while **VAPPIE** reported to be on duty, **CANTRELL** obtained non-public information about the citizen, filed a police report, and sought a restraining order against the citizen.

Acting U.S. Attorney Simpson reiterated that an indictment is merely a charge and that the guilt of the defendants must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

If they are convicted of the conspiracy to commit wire fraud, **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** each faces up to five years in prison and up to three years of supervised release. For each count of wire fraud, **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** each faces up to twenty years in prison and up to three years of supervised release. For the conspiracy to obstruct justice, **CANTRELL** and **VAPPIE** each faces up to twenty years in prison and up to three years of supervised release. For the false statement to the FBI, **VAPPIE** faces up to five years in prison and up to three years of supervised release. For each obstruction of justice count, **CANTRELL** faces up to twenty years in prison and up to three years of supervised release. For each count of making false statements to a grand jury, **CANTRELL** faces up to five years in prison and up to three years of supervised release. For each count, both defendants face a fine of up to \$250,000 and a \$100 mandatory special assessment fee.

Acting U.S. Attorney Simpson praised the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in investigating this matter and expressed appreciation for the support provided by the Department of Justice's Computer Crimes and Intellectual Properties Section Cybercrime Lab, the City of New Orleans Office of Inspector General, and the Metropolitan Crime Commission. Assistant United States Attorneys Jordan Ginsberg, Chief of the Public Integrity Unit, and Nicholas D. Moses, of the Financial Crimes Unit and Health Care Fraud Coordinator, are in charge of the prosecution.

* * *