



The City of New York
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DOI SUBSTANTIATES MISCONDUCT BY TWO FIRE DEPARTMENT EMS EMPLOYEES
--DOI investigation leads to arrest of an EMT on theft charges--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), released the results of two investigations that found wrongdoing by two employees of the New York City Fire Department's ("FDNY") Emergency Medical Service ("EMS").

One case led to the arrest of an Emergency Medical Technician on charges of stealing money from the purse of a relative who accompanied a family member that the EMT transported to the hospital. The EMT is charged with stealing the money from the purse at the hospital. EDGARDO COLLAZO, 40, was charged today with Petit Larceny, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree, and Official Misconduct, which are class A misdemeanors. Upon conviction, a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year's incarceration. DOI's findings regarding this incident were referred to the Office of Bronx District Attorney, Robert T. Johnson, and to the FDNY, resulting in COLLAZO's resignation and his arrest. He was employed with FDNY from April 1999 until January 2013, when he resigned. At the time of his resignation, his base salary was \$48,153.

In a separate case, DOI found that EMS Lieutenant Jorge Blondett, 44, fraudulently obtained 24 days of paid military leave in 2011 and 2012 based on his false oral and written representations to his supervisors that he was on active military duty with the Air Force Reserve, and, as a result, received approximately \$6,000 in paid leave from the FDNY. DOI found that during that leave Blondett traveled to Portugal for an eight-day vacation while he collected full pay having falsely claimed to be on military duty. These findings were referred to criminal prosecutors for review and to the FDNY for administrative action. Blondett has been employed with FDNY since 1996 and receives an annual salary of \$64,482.

A copy of DOI's summary of these two investigations follows this release.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Emergency medical personnel must ensure that their conduct never detracts from the trust the public places in them. The troubling actions of two EMS workers in this report, stealing from an individual in a vulnerable situation, and lying to the FDNY to take a paid vacation, along with other recent revelations of misconduct, are a disservice to the majority of EMS employees who provide New Yorkers with vital care. This should be a warning to those who would abuse the public's trust that DOI will investigate, and the consequences can include arrest, fines, and loss of employment."

As a result of these investigations, DOI will be conducting weekly corruption prevention lectures this month to groups of EMS employees.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked FDNY Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano and Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson, and their staffs, for their cooperation and assistance in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for FDNY.

Assistant District Attorney Samantha Alongi from the Bronx County District Attorney's Office is prosecuting the case against COLLAZO.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS INVOLVING WRONGDOING BY TWO FIRE DEPARTMENT EMS EMPLOYEES

**ROSE GILL HEARN
COMMISSIONER**

April 2013

The New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) conducted two separate investigations involving members of the New York City Fire Department's (FDNY) Emergency Medical Service (EMS). As discussed below in these summaries, both investigations resulted in substantiated findings of wrongdoing.

1. Former Emergency Medical Technician Edgardo Collazo

In the first case, DOI found that FDNY former Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Edgardo Collazo, while employed and on duty with the FDNY, stole \$300 from a purse he found in a restroom at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx. The purse belonged to a relative of the patient he had transported to the hospital that same day, and had been inadvertently left in the bathroom.

In November 2012, Montefiore Hospital referred a complaint from a hospital visitor who reported that her purse was missing after she inadvertently left it in a unisex restroom. The purse was later recovered from a trashcan by the hospital's custodial staff, and \$300 in U.S. currency was missing from the purse.

DOI reviewed the hospital's video surveillance system, which showed a male dressed in an EMT uniform matching Collazo's description exiting the restroom in possession of a purse similar to the one reported missing. Based on employee identification photographs provided by the FDNY, Edgardo Collazo was identified as the EMT seen exiting the restroom with the lost purse.

DOI interviewed the complainant, who said that she accompanied her sister to Montefiore Hospital via ambulance. Once at the hospital, she used the public restroom and left her purse there accidentally. When she returned to the restroom a short time later, her purse was gone. She then reported it missing to hospital security, and was later informed that the purse had been found in a trashcan near the public bathroom. The complainant reported that \$300 was missing from her purse.

On December 20, 2012, EMT Collazo was interviewed by DOI and admitted to stealing the money from the complainant's purse and then discarding the purse in a trashcan located next to the restroom. Collazo was initially placed on modified duty and later suspended from duty for the theft as well as unrelated administrative violation discovered by DOI.

These findings were referred to the Bronx District Attorney's Office. On April 4, 2013, Collazo was arrested and charged with Petit Larceny, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree, and Official Misconduct. As a result of this investigation, Collazo resigned from the FDNY in January 2013. Collazo remains eligible to collect his pension at the appropriate age.¹

¹ EMT Collazo was employed with the FDNY as an EMT, assigned to Station 27 in the Bronx, starting in 1999.

2. EMS Lieutenant Jorge Blondett

In the second case, DOI found that FDNY EMS Lieutenant Jorge Blondett, a former medic with the U.S. Air Force Reserve, falsely reported to the FDNY on multiple occasions that he was out on military duty, resulting in his receiving 24 days of paid military leave from the FDNY between June 2011, and June 2012, valued at approximately \$6,000.²

The investigation began in June 2012, after Blondett's FDNY supervisor was informed that Blondett had been on vacation in Portugal during a time period in which Blondett had told the supervisor that he would be out on military leave. Blondett had requested military leave from May 23, 2012 through June 3, 2012, a total of 10 days.

Upon his return from the leave, Blondett submitted a document to his supervisor entitled "Request and Authorization for Active Duty Training/Active Duty Tour." The document indicated that the military leave orders were "By Order of the Secretary of the Air Force," and indicated that Blondett was ordered to participate in annual training at the McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey from May 30, 2012, through June 3, 2012, covering a portion of the period of time that Blondett claimed to have been on military duty. The FDNY reported the matter to DOI after learning that he might have, in fact, been on vacation during the "military leave."

In fact, DOI determined that Lt. Blondett had been discharged from the U.S. Air Force Reserve in April 2011 and that the Air Force Reserve had not issued any military orders to Blondett since that time. Furthermore, records obtained by DOI indicated that Blondett had in fact traveled from Philadelphia to Portugal on May 23, 2012, and returned from Portugal to Philadelphia on May 30, 2012, accounting for eight of the ten days in which he claimed to be on active duty in the Air Force Reserve.

On Saturday, October 13, 2012, DOI discovered Blondett was home at his residence in New York City, despite the fact that he had again claimed to his supervisor to have military duty that weekend. Blondett admitted to DOI that he had not been in the military since April 2011 and that he had falsely claimed to have military duty on multiple occasions in order to obtain paid leave from work. Lt. Blondett further acknowledged that when his supervisor requested documentation, he had forged the purported military orders that he submitted to the FDNY for his military leave in May and June 2012.

DOI determined that, in sum, Blondett fraudulently obtained 24 days of paid military leave from the FDNY, totaling approximately \$6,000 in salary to which he was not entitled. DOI's findings have been referred to both the New York County District Attorney's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Southern District Office and to the FDNY.³

² Jorge Blondett has been employed with the FDNY's EMS since 1996. He first served as a Paramedic. In 2005, he was promoted to EMS Lieutenant.

³ He is currently assigned to EMS Station 8, in Manhattan's Division 1, on modified duty.