



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ARRESTS NINE PARKS DEPARTMENT CONTRACTORS FOR ALLEGEDLY PAYING BRIBES TO AVOID
PREVAILING WAGE FINES**

--The arrests mark the largest DOI operation involving Parks' contractors in the last 15 years--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrests of nine New York City Department of Parks and Recreation contractors for allegedly paying thousands in bribes to avoid being fined for prevailing wage violations. As part of an ongoing, covert operation, DOI found that between 2005 and 2006 the nine contractors paid bribes ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. In total, the contractors paid \$18,500 in bribes. They allegedly gave the bribes to an undercover investigator in exchange for lifting a "stop payment" order that had been placed on their contracts because of prevailing wage violations.

The investigation into the nine contractors on corruption charges is the largest DOI has conducted in the last 15 years in the Parks Department. DOI is working with the Parks department and the Queens County District Attorney's Office to ensure that the employees who were not paid adequately under the prevailing wage law will be compensated. DOI found that at least 25 employees who worked for the various contractors were not adequately paid. To be clear, these nine arrested individuals are not employees of the Parks Department.

The nine contractors who were arrested are: FAIZ AHMED, TAREK AHMED, ZIA CHAUDRY, KAMIL OZTURK AND RANA USMANI all from Brooklyn. The remaining contractors are SAJAD CHOUDHARY, of Staten Island; BELAL HOSSAIN, of Tuckahoe, N.Y.; SHAFIQU LAM, of Queens, and SYED JAMIL, of Hillcrest, N.Y.

Each contractor has been charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. If convicted, each faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "These nine individuals won their contracts by placing the lowest bid on the project. They then failed to pay their employees the wages legally required and tried to mask that by offering bribes to a Parks inspector. Unbeknownst to them, the 'Parks inspector' was an undercover investigator from the Department of Investigation. That nine contractors would engage in this behavior suggests this illegal activity has become what some may think is an accepted practice. This investigation, culminating in these arrests, should demonstrate that view is misguided. City contractors doing business with the City should be aware they must obey the law. If they don't, they will face serious consequences, even possible prison time, and lose the ability to receive future City contracts. As this case shows, DOI will continue to root out this type of criminal activity."

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown said, "The defendants are accused of unjustly enriching themselves at the expense of their own workers. Contractors doing business with the City are legally bound to pay their employees fair and prevailing wages. My office is firmly committed to enforcing the prevailing wage laws and ensuring that the rights of workers are protected."

Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe said, "Workers restoring our neighborhood parks deserve fair and legal compensation and we commend the Department of Investigation for their efforts to root out corruption among contractors who do business with the City of New York. The Parks Department is committed to a transparent and competitive process to select contractors. We were pleased to join with the Department of Investigation and Queens District Attorney Richard Brown in their inquiry to ensure that every contractor pays a prevailing wage – a prerequisite for getting business with the City – because it is good for the economy and good for all New Yorkers."

A DOI investigation found the following:

FAIZ AHMED, 48, of Brooklyn: In April 2005, AHMED was the foreman of Bamta Construction in Brooklyn and allegedly paid a \$2,500 bribe to lift a “stop payment” order associated with a prevailing wage violation for a contract at the Ocean Parkway Malls in Brooklyn. The contract paid about \$557,000. In November 2005, AHMED was a foreman at Aay Zee Contracting in Brooklyn, and he allegedly paid a \$2,000 bribe to lift a “stop payment” order for violations against Aay Zee on the Crotona Park Malls project in the Bronx. That contract paid about \$578,000. Most recently, AHMED was the Vice President of Harman Contracting in Brooklyn.

SHAFIQUL ISLAM, 48, of Queens: In April 2005, ISLAM was the owner of Mondol Construction in Astoria, and he allegedly paid a \$1,000 bribe to overlook prevailing wage violations on the Sternberg Park ball fields’ construction project in Brooklyn. His company was being paid nearly \$1.1 million for construction on the site. In June 2006, he allegedly paid a \$1,000 bribe to overlook prevailing wage violations in connection with the Brookville Park construction located in Queens. The contract price was \$627,000.

SYED JAMIL, 49, of Hillcrest, N.Y.: In May 2005, JAMIL was the owner of D & A Construction in Sunnyside when he allegedly paid a \$1,500 bribe to lift a “stop payment” order associated with the Pomonok Playground contract at P.S. 201 located in Queens. The contract price was about \$1.7 million.

KAMIL OZTURK, 48 of Brooklyn: In May 2005, OZTURK was the owner of Bosphorus Construction in Brooklyn when he allegedly paid a \$1,000 bribe to rescind a “stop payment” order on Bosphorus’ contract with the City. Bosphorus was subcontracting for D & A on the Pomonok Playground project.

BELAL HOSSAIN, 48, of Tuckahoe, N.Y.: In June 2005, HOSSAIN was the owner of B & H Contracting in Brooklyn when he allegedly paid a \$4,500 bribe to rescind a “stop payment” order for prevailing wage violations on a contract to construct the Roy Wilkins Turf Athletic Field located in Queens. The contract price was about \$1 million.

TAREK AHMED, 44, of Brooklyn: In October 2005, AHMED was the owner of Harman Contracting in Brooklyn when he allegedly paid a \$1,000 bribe to lift a “stop payment” order against his company for prevailing wage violations found at the Pratt, Greenwood and St. Andrews Playground construction sites in Brooklyn. The contract price was about \$873,000. AHMED is the president of Harman Contracting and is also a business partner of FAIZ AHMED. It is unknown if he is related to FAIZ AHMED.

ZIA CHAUDRY, 51, of Brooklyn: In March 2006, CHAUDRY was the owner of Aay Zee Contracting when he allegedly paid a \$1,000 bribe to overlook prevailing wage violations against Aay Zee, which was contracted to do reconstruction at Maria Hernandez Park in Brooklyn. The contract price was nearly \$1.5 million.

RANA USMANI, 42, of Brooklyn: In March 2006, USMANI was the owner of Chase Building and Renovation, Inc., in Brooklyn, when he allegedly paid a \$2,000 bribe in exchange for lifting a stop payment order for prevailing wage violations on contracts his company held with the Parks department to reconstruct various City parks in Brooklyn. The contract price was \$648,000.

SAJAD CHOUDHARY, 47, of Staten Island: In October 2006, CHOUDHARY was owner of Midwood Construction in Brooklyn, when he allegedly paid a \$1,000 bribe to rescind a “stop payment” order against the construction company for prevailing wage violations found at the Shore Road Park baseball dugouts’ construction site in Brooklyn. The contract price was about \$170,000.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked the office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown and members of his staff, including Assistant District Attorney Yvonne Francis and Bureau Chief James Liander. Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked Commissioner Adrian Benepe of the Department of Parks and Recreation and members of his staff for their assistance and cooperation in this matter.

The investigation was conducted by DOI’s Inspector General’s Office for Department of Parks & Recreation, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Vincent E. Green and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Theresa Land-Latta, Special Investigator Virginia Giunta and Assistant Inspector General Belarminia Ortiz. Dets. Robert Desena and Russell Kennedy conducted the investigation for DOI’s Investigative Squad of the New York City Police Department.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are 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.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple.

To report someone ripping off the city, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.