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Department of Investigation

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Release #22-2014  
[nyc.gov/html/doi](http://nyc.gov/html/doi)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2014**

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**DOI COMMISSIONER MARK G. PETERS DELIVERS OPENING REMARKS AT  
ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL FALL TRAINING CONFERENCE IN NEW JERSEY**

Mark G. Peters, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), delivered opening remarks at the Association of Inspectors General Fall Training Conference in Newark, N.J. this morning, speaking about "Fighting Corruption for a New Era." Commissioner Peters' remarks focused on DOI's distinctive role within City government, and its mandate to attack corruption comprehensively by both rooting out corruption and looking at City agencies broadly to identify common problems that undermine New Yorkers' access to City services. Below is the text of the Commissioner's speech.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters  
Speech at the Association of Inspectors General Fall Conference  
"Fighting Corruption for a New Era"

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today at a conference that features so many impressive public servants who will explore the wide and significant impact Inspectors General have within government. It is an honor to be counted among you.

Last year, in New York City, there was an election in which the voters overwhelmingly embraced the idea that government has the ability, indeed the obligation, to play an increased and important role in helping all of our citizens. If you believe, as I do, in this increased and important role, then the first obligation of that government is to deliver those services honestly, and effectively, and efficiently.

And that, is DOI's mandate.

To be more specific, I think that mandate has three parts. First, it is not enough to simply arrest individual rule breakers -- though of course we do that, and do it well and often. Rather, our objective is to attack corruption broadly, by using investigations as a gateway to look at agencies comprehensively. DOI is fundamentally an agency of Inspectors General who have an integral and tangible impact on how government delivers its services to the people and whether the people have equal access to those services.

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Second, we need to recognize that DOI is uniquely situated to carry out this mandate. Because we have citywide jurisdiction, we can see how problems exist across a broad range of agencies. No City agency operates as an island, and DOI's access to City records, databases, properties, and its frontline understanding of how things work, needs to be leveraged to view the City as a whole -- not just as 45 mayoral agencies, operating in their individual worlds. DOI's advantage is that its broad jurisdiction gives it an incredibly vast vantage point to identify common problems and work with those agencies to remedy the problems. Further, with a staff of 400 lawyers, forensic auditors, investigators and administrative staff, we deeply understand the agencies we oversee. We are experts in the agencies, but not of the agencies -- an important distinction, since we have perspective and distance.

Third, there are real-world consequences when DOI is not empowered to carry out this mandate. The unchecked explosion in the use of stop-and-frisk over the past decade, an explosion that undermined that tactic's valid law enforcement purpose and created serious fissures between the police and the communities they are sworn to protect, is a prime example. One I plan to discuss in some detail today.

Indeed, let me give you three examples of how DOI's mandate works in practice. The first -- Rikers Island -- has been very much in the news lately. The second -- fraud prevention in the City's Universal Pre-Kindergarten ("UPK") program -- because of our hard work, has not been in the news at all. And the third -- the newly created Office of Inspector General for the NYPD -- is a new area for DOI that I suspect we will all be talking about quite a bit in the future.

Probing the root causes of violence on Rikers Island became a top priority for me shortly after I took office eight months ago. DOI's work in this area has been consistent and ongoing -- identifying corrupt uniformed officers in the jails, building a criminal case, and making an arrest. But the facts we were uncovering, and the sheer number of investigations we were doing, which have led to 17 convictions of correction officers and other correctional staff in the past five years on contraband and assault/false report cases, demonstrated that something more systemic was going on. I sat down with the IGs and investigators and we began looking at the problem across all of Rikers, not just as individual cases. Here, DOI's unique access to the Correction Department's reports, statistics, records, and personnel allowed a broad perspective and led us to start a large-scale investigation that has resulted so far this year in the arrest of 10 correction officers and supervisors on drug, contraband, and assault and cover-up offenses; large-scale sweeps of some of the jail facilities, where we worked with the Correction Department and arrested inmates for concealing contraband among other offenses; and assessing Rikers screening of the uniformed staff entering the facilities.

And next month, we will cull our findings and recommendations from our broad investigation in a comprehensive report that will detail the various systemic problems including contraband smuggling, evidence tampering by uniformed personnel and systemic violence. DOI's view is important and exceptional, because of investigators' thorough knowledge of Rikers and the procedures and policies of the Correction Department. Indeed, unlike any other entity, DOI is in a distinct position to uncover problems and understand how to effect change.

The Rikers' investigation speaks to DOI's core function -- where there is a problem of wrongdoing or abuse, DOI will drill down on the facts, arrest perpetrators, find out what went wrong and suggest recommended changes. The investigation also speaks to DOI's ability to pull back from individual cases and see the big picture, gaining an understanding of how those cases may be interconnected. And finally, the Rikers investigation speaks to DOI's unique role: no other monitoring or law enforcement agency has a similar combination of access to inside information, arrest powers, and issue-area expertise.

The second example I would like to discuss reflects how DOI's expertise and understanding of New York City functions can be used when government expands or establishes new initiatives. When Mayor de Blasio

embarked on his innovative and ambitious Universal Pre-Kindergarten initiative DOI was a fundamental part of ensuring integrity in the contracting process and ultimately that taxpayer dollars were spent honestly. What did that mean? First, we worked with our government colleagues, pulling together information from the City safety agencies that oversee the process including the Departments of Education, Buildings, Fire, Children's Services, and Health. We also looked at our own investigative databases and used what we had learned from investigations that uncovered fraud and abuse, namely that unscrupulous individuals will capitalize on City agencies not sharing information, to fraudulently get contracts and public funds. DOI checked a number of important indicators, including confirming there were recent Health inspections and permits of the vendors interested in running UPK programs, that proper Building regulations were followed, and recent fire inspections were conducted. DOI conducted thousands of corporate/affiliate name checks and principal name checks. We relayed the facts to City officials so informed choices could be made on who could serve as UPK vendors, and so that children – and the City -- could be safeguarded from fraudulent vendors.

The roll out was successful: as of the time of program launch, over 53,000 of the City's four-year-olds are being served, and DOI was an important part of that herculean effort.

Yet we didn't rest on that success but looked for a way to extrapolate what we learned so it could be used in a broader way. From those lessons learned, we worked with the Mayor's Office to establish an integrity committee involving participants from the relevant City agencies that regulate child care subsidies in the City, which includes the UPK initiative. The goal – share information among these agencies so a lack of communication could NOT be exploited by individuals looking for an easy way to pocket public funds. In one investigation that culminated this summer, in a case not involving a UPK site, DOI found one City agency continued to pay child care subsidies to a provider for a year after another City agency knew the child care center had never opened. There was no mechanism in place for the agencies to share that information and as the agencies had different functions, each misunderstood the importance of sharing and/or acting on this significant data. DOI is working with those agencies to bridge that gap and ensure that this type of miscommunication is remedied.

This committee's goal is to put an end on a systemic level to those sorts of information silos. We have also invited City officials with an expertise in data analysis and technology so the City can, for example, compare child care enrollment information across agencies to identify providers attempting to double-dip in the public coffers. This type of data-mapping is key in maximizing our own resources, finding wrongdoing more quickly, and spotting trends. DOI is in the process of establishing similar data-mapping techniques in other areas as well, and we are uniquely poised to do this type of work because we understand how each agency maintains its data and how it can be leveraged to expose corrupt conduct.

The third example demonstrates how DOI examines an agency's policies and programs and whether they serve the public. In fact, that mission is exactly what the New York City Council had in mind when they passed Local Law 70, which empowers the DOI Commissioner to "investigate, review, study, audit and make recommendations relating to the operations, policies, programs and practices ... of the New York City Police Department ..." The goals: enhance the effectiveness of the department, increase public safety, protect civil liberties and civil rights, and increase the public's confidence in the police force.

Earlier this year, I selected the City's first-ever Inspector General for the NYPD, appointing a police oversight expert from Washington D.C., Phil Eure, and getting down to the business of formulating what DOI's role would be in the field of police oversight. In New York City, we have a Civilian Complaint Review Board and an NYPD internal affairs bureau looking at individual complaints, but DOI is uniquely charged with looking at systemic, policy-level issues. We are here to understand the inner-workings of the NYPD, and bring an intelligent, meaningful, outside perspective to police oversight in NYC. To that end, we have hired a team of

individuals who bring a wide range of experiences, including a former prosecutor from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office to be the Deputy IG, a former veteran NYPD detective who oversaw the North Manhattan Homicide Task Force to run investigations, and a former Muslim Bar Association president with expertise on civil rights issues to be the IG's General Counsel. DOI's NYPD IG seeks to push past the rhetoric, uncover the facts, and recommend real change that will result in better policing.

The office's mandate is to look at the Police Department in all areas where the police and public come together. A core goal of the office is to make sure the NYPD is protecting New Yorkers the way they should, respecting New Yorkers' civil rights and liberties. If we take a look at Stop-and-Frisk, which was one of the driving issues behind the establishment of an IG, I think it's a good example of why the creation of the NYPD IG was so important. Twelve years ago, the number of stops in this City was about 100,000. Two years ago, it was 700,000. The number had gone up seven-fold. If, back then, there had been an independent entity, not part of the Police Department, that could step back, step outside the Police Department, and with the powers and authority of DOI, review that increase, things might have been different. That IG might have said, 'Wait a minute, is there data suggesting why there was an increase in stops from 100,000 to 700,000? Is there data suggesting the validity of stopping 700,000 people on the premise of seeing a potential weapon on them? Did those last 200,000 stops really recover relevant and significant evidence? Is it an efficient use of police time? And by the way, does the resulting trade-off of a wary community, in exchange for whatever additional crimes we find, make sense in the long-range view of policing, given that as we know a major core of policing is community relations and tips from the public?'

Important questions, by a third-party, that would have benefited the City two years ago. Currently, we are in the process of setting the priorities for the NYPD OIG as it continues to staff up and establish itself.

The concept that it's important to have somebody who can step back and take a look at the way an agency is delivering services, applies beyond the Police Department to every other major City agency. And that is what we are doing at DOI, in addition to our core functions.

In these investigations and reports, you see the spectrum of issues DOI probes. DOI looks not only to find crimes but also to prevent similar wrongdoing and problems from happening in the future. The theme that runs through each is the same: as the City's watchdog against corruption, fraud and abuse, DOI is chiefly situated to gauge whether the City is delivering the services it promises to New Yorkers.

That is in the best interest of this City.

It is good governance.

Like each of you, DOI seeks to protect those interests and ensure that government is truly serving the needs of its people.

Thank you and I'm happy to take questions.

*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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