



Department of Investigation *Press Releases*

2 Staten Island Homeowners Arrested In DOI "Sting"

\$2000 Plus Paid To HPD Inspectors TO Ignore Illegal Apartments

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2000 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the arrests of Staten Island homeowners JOHN BARBIERI and DILBERA LAZAI, for paying a total of \$2,112 in cash bribes and gratuities to inspectors from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), who cooperated in separate DOI undercover investigations. The payoffs were allegedly given to remove housing violations each of the homeowners had received for having illegal apartments on their property.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "These arrests are part of DOI's ongoing effort to deter municipal corruption and should serve as a stern warning to any citizen who might even be tempted to bribe a City worker. In each case, the HPD inspector immediately reported the attempted payoff to DOI and, in one instance, actually wore a concealed recorder to catch the corrupt homeowner in the act of bribing him. The inspectors's actions are to be applauded. They represent the overwhelming majority of good, honest, and decent City employees"

In 1999, he added, DOI arrested 20 individuals, including 11 property owners, for giving nearly \$36,000 in bribes or unlawful gratuities to City employees.

The details of the investigation leading to the arrests are summarized below:

1) JOHN BARBIERI

DOI commenced an investigation this past July when an HPD inspector reported that BARBIERI was repeatedly trying to contact him at his office, which is highly irregular. The inspector, who had written violations for an illegal apartment he had discovered on the third floor of a three-family home BARBIERI owned at 57 Park Avenue in Staten Island, was concerned that BARBIERI might make him an inappropriate offer. As a result, the cooperating inspector wore a concealed recording device when he met with BARBIERI, who allegedly paid him \$2,000 in cash not to record the violations.

BARBIERI, 35, of Staten Island, was charged with the felonies of Bribery in the Third Degree and Rewarding Official Misconduct in the Second Degree. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

2) DILBERA LAZAI

Also, in July 1999, an HPD inspector reported that, during a court-ordered inspection of an alleged illegal

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basement apartment at 287 Cromwell Avenue in Staten Island, the home's owner, LAZAI, offered him an unspecified amount of money to ignore various housing code violations. After issuing two violations to LAZAI for an illegal basement kitchen and bathroom, the inspector left the premises and immediately reported the incident to DOI. Thereafter, an undercover housing inspector, wearing a concealed recording device, returned to the Cromwell Avenue residence and met with LAZAI, who allegedly paid him \$112 to remove from HPD's records the violations she had previously received.

LAZAI, 55, of Staten Island, was charged with Giving Unlawful Gratuities, a class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail.

The investigation was conducted by Brian D. Foley, DOI's Inspector General for HPD, and members of his staff, including Special Investigator David Jordan.

The Office of Richmond County District Attorney William L. Murphy is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Rick Pasacreta is handling the matter.