



# Department of Investigation

## *Press Release*

**Release #004-2001**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2001**

### **EX-CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY CLERK ARRESTED IN PHONE THEFT** ***– Stole Co-Worker's Cell Phone; In 3 Months Made 1,375 Calls Costing \$1,500 –***

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the arrest of GARY ROBERTS, a former New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) mail clerk, for stealing a cellular telephone, which had been shipped to another NYCHA employee at agency offices in lower Manhattan, and, over a 3-month period, making 1,375 local, long distance, and international calls, costing a total of nearly \$1,500, to family members and friends in New York, Maryland, California, and the island of Granada.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, an investigation began last April, when the victim, a 43-year-old NYCHA clerical associate, notified DOI that she had received a \$29.95 credit card bill for a cell phone she had ordered on December 31, 1999, but had never received.

The investigation disclosed that ROBERTS allegedly took the cell phone from a temporary 7th-floor mail room at NYCHA's 90 Church Street offices, where he was assigned to sort and deliver mail. A package containing an activated and ready-to-use Ericsson model cell phone had been shipped by Paradigm Cellular Wireless of Fort Lee, New Jersey, a cellular phone service provider, and delivered by United Parcel Service to the NYCHA mail room on January 7, 2000. The package was, however, not listed as having arrived in the mail room's shipping/receiving log. According to NYCHA time sheets, ROBERTS, a mail room clerk since his hiring in July 1993 until his resignation in September 2000, had worked a full day in the mail room on the day the package was delivered.

The investigation further revealed that ROBERTS had used the cell phone to make a total of 1,375 calls (1,350 local, 17 long distance, and 8 international), costing a total of \$1,497, to family and friends in the City's 5 boroughs, upstate New York, Maryland, California, and Grenada. The first call, on January 19, 2000, was made to Hawthorne, California, and the last call, on April 15, 2000, was made to a New York City cell phone number. The least expensive call, a long distance call to Syracuse, New York, cost \$.15, and the most expensive call, to the Bronx, cost \$41. The 8 international calls to Grenada cost a total of \$28.50. Investigators phoned some of the numbers in the stolen cell phone billing record, and the parties who were contacted acknowledged that it had been ROBERTS who had called them on the dates and times indicated.

ROBERTS, 25, of 3422 110<sup>th</sup> Street in Corona, Queens, currently a van driver for Trial Graphix, 216 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, was employed by NYCHA from July 6, 1993, to September 22, 2000, earning an annual salary of \$23,454. He was charged with Theft of Services, a Class E felony, and Petit Larceny, a Class

A misdemeanor. If convicted, he faces up to 4 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow, and members of his staff, including Deputy IG Steven Gruberger and Special Investigator Frank Carubia.

The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Gregory Rofman is handling the matter.