



The City of New York
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DOI ARRESTS FORMER TOWING WORKER FOR FRAUD

- Used False Identities in Three States for Drivers' Licenses, Car Registrations and Identification Cards -

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the felony arrest of a former tow truck worker who fraudulently obtained two New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) identification cards -- under two different names and birth dates -- and used two Pennsylvania driver's licenses -- under different false names and birth dates -- to work at three tow truck companies in Queens even though his New York State driver's license had been revoked.

Irving Gonzalez, 33, of Richmond Hill Queens, has been charged with Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, both class E felonies. If convicted, he faces up to four years' imprisonment.

Now a security guard for a Long Island City company, Gonzalez once searched the streets of Queens for scofflaw cars to be seized by City Marshals and the City Sheriff's Office. But he repeatedly used false names, dates of birth, social security numbers and multiple addresses on license and registration documents to prevent his employers, as well as City and State authorities from linking his own violations, which included driving without insurance, and unpaid fines exceeding \$11,000, said Commissioner Gill Hearn. The false identification also helped him obtain purportedly valid drivers' licenses from Pennsylvania.

"It's offensive that someone entrusted to enforce fines and penalties on others is one of the worst offenders," said Gill Hearn.

A joint DOI-DMV investigation determined that between 1994 and 2001, after Gonzalez's New York driver's license had been revoked, he filed numerous applications containing false information with the motor vehicle agencies of three states, said Commissioner Gill Hearn. In May 1994, for example, Gonzalez used the name "Irving M. Gonzales," as well as a false date-of-birth and social security number, to apply unsuccessfully for a Massachusetts driver's license. In October 1995, he used a false date-of-birth and social security number to obtain a Pennsylvania driver's license under a similar but different name, "Christopher I. Gonzalez." He renewed that license in July 1999. Two years later, in July 2001, he obtained a second Pennsylvania license when his first Pennsylvania license been suspended.

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From June 1995 and December 2000, Gonzalez used the same fake date of birth as he had used for his first false Pennsylvania license to obtain five New York State non-driver identification (ID) cards as "Christopher I. Gonzalez." In August 2001, he acquired still another non-driver ID card under his legal name, "Irving Gonzalez," but he falsely claimed he didn't have a license from another state. Moreover, Gonzalez used a variety of addresses and false identities to register several vehicles in New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, said Gill Hearn.

Using his Pennsylvania driver's license for identification, from 1999 and 2001, Gonzalez worked intermittently for three Queens tow companies (J & J Auto Repair, Fleet Recovery Corp. and Mr. Z Towing) that contracted with the City Sheriff's Office, as well as two City Marshals. He helped them tow cars whose owners had not paid New York City parking summonses.

DOI's investigation began in April 2001 after Gonzalez was arrested for driving without a valid license. He first attracted the officer's attention because he was driving slowly a car with a Pennsylvania license plate and repeatedly stopping and peering at parked cars. Gonzalez flashed the officer a phony shield and claimed to be working for the City Sheriff's Office. DOI and DMV investigators followed up on the officer's report and discovered that Gonzalez had used various false names, dates of birth, and social security numbers to obtain drivers' licenses, identification cards and vehicle registrations in three states, as well as several credit cards and bank accounts, said Gill Hearn.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Bureau of City Marshals and its NYPD Detective Squad, together with the DMV Office of Field Investigations. At DOI, the principal investigators were Assistant Inspector General Percy Corcoran and NYPD Detective Thomas A. Barnes. At DMV, Investigators John Perez and Kenneth G. McDermott of the Metro Frauds Unit worked on the case.

The Office of the Queens District Attorney, Richard A. Brown, is prosecuting the case, which has been assigned to Assistant District Attorney Phyllis Weiss, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney James Liander, Chief of the Integrity Bureau.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked the Office of the Inspector General of the United States Social Security Administration, particularly Special Agent Harry Maldonado, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, New York City Department of Finance Commissioner Martha E. Stark and the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles for their assistance in the investigation.

The charges are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple. To make complaints about someone ripping off the city, call DOI at 212-825-5959.