



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release # 054-2000

DOI Arrests DOT Clerk, Husband, Friend In Extortion Plot *-Tried To Shakedown Supervisor For \$5,000 In Sex Harass Scam-*

Release Date -- THURSDAY, JULY 6, 2000

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of TINA SENATORE, a part-time City Department of Transportation (DOT) clerk, FRANK SENATORE, her husband, and ROBERT WILLAGAR, their friend, for trying to extort \$5,000 in "hush money" from a DOT supervisor in a sex harassment shakedown scheme.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, the investigation began last week immediately after the DOT Advocate General referred the supervisor's complaint to DOI. The supervisor reported that FRANK SENATORE had demanded a \$5,000 payoff from him, threatening that if the payment were not made, either Mrs. SENATORE would file a sexual harassment lawsuit against him, or SENATORE would physically beat him.

The investigation disclosed that, on June 27, SENATORE went to the supervisor's lower Manhattan office, falsely accused the victim (who was not even Mrs. SENATORE's own supervisor) of sexually harassing his wife, and issued the victim a 3- day deadline for making a decision on a 3-option ultimatum: a sexual harassment lawsuit by Mrs. SENATORE; a "head bashing" by SENATORE; or, a \$5,000 payoff by the victim.

The investigation further revealed that the SENATOIRES later left telephone voice-mail messages at the victim's office and residence, reminding the victim of his "choices" and the impending deadline.

On June 30, the victim, assisting DOI, met SENATORE at a prearranged street location near his DOT office. When the victim handed SENATORE a cash-stuffed envelope, DOI investigators, who had staked out the site, immediately arrested SENATORE. SENATORE's wife and their friend, WILLAGAR, who had driven SENATORE to the payoff site, were also arrested later the same day.

The SENATOIRES, both 44, of Brooklyn, and WILLAGAR, 44, of Brooklyn, each have been charged with Grand Larceny in the Second Degree (By Extortion), a Class C felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Additionally, Mrs. SENATORE, a former Work Experience Program (WEP) worker who was hired by DOT in January 1997 as a part-time clerical associate and has since worked as a secretary for the assistant commissioner of management information systems, a receptionist, and a clerk -- earning \$12.86 an hour -- has been terminated.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to DOT Commissioner Wilbur L. Chapman and members of his staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for DOT, Ronald P. Calvosa, and members of his staff, including Confidential Investigator Edward Zinser, and Captain Robert T. Kelly, Commanding Officer of DOI's Investigative Squad, and members of his staff, including Detective Sergeant Dennis Crowley and Detectives Antoine Dandridge and Garry Ferguson.

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