



# Department of Investigation

## *Press Release*

Release #057-2000

### **DOI Arrests Queens Homeowner In Bribery "Sting" -Paid Buildings Inspector \$2,000 TO Ignore Illegal Conversion-**

Release Date --THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2000

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of SHAY SHANI, a Queens property owner and real estate agent, for paying a \$2,000 bribe to a DOI undercover agent posing as a City Department of Buildings (DOB) supervisor. The payoff allegedly was in return for removing code violations relating to the illegal conversion of SHANI's 1-family house into a multiple dwelling.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "This arrest is part of DOI's ongoing effort to deter municipal corruption and should serve as fair warning to any citizen who might even be tempted to bribe a City worker. In this case, the DOB inspector properly noted serious violations during an inspection, twice rebuffed the homeowner's illicit entreaties, and promptly reported the matter to DOI. His actions are to be commended. He represents the overwhelming majority of good, honest, and decent City employees."

Acting Buildings Commissioner Richard C. Visconti said, "I applaud the actions of DOB's inspector and the efforts of DOI's staff. It is too often assumed that City employees initiate corrupt activity. DOI's response to this situation shows that any individual who attempts to bribe or entice a City worker into wrongdoing will be actively and effectively pursued."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI began an investigation immediately after a DOB code enforcement inspector reported that on June 15, 2000, during an inspection of a private house at 84-24 Kew Gardens Road, Queens, conducted in response to a neighbor's complaint, he discovered that the second floor of the premises had been illegally converted into a separate apartment with a bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen. The inspector stated that when he issued the homeowner, SHANI, 2 violations -- one for an illegal alteration, and the other for occupancy contrary to the building's C of O -- SHANI had offered to pay him \$800 to remove the violations, but he refused the overture. The inspector added that SHANI even came to his office the following day, and this time offered to pay him \$2,000 to remove the violations, but he again declined.

Later that same day, June 16, DOI sent a undercover agent, posing as the DOB inspector's supervisor and wearing a concealed recording device, to meet with SHANI to discuss the violations. At the meeting, which took place on a public street near his home, SHANI allegedly gave the undercover \$2,000 in cash and asked him to remove the violations against the property from City records.

Commissioner Kuriansky explained that the conversion violated the building's certificate of occupancy, which restricted the house to single-family residency, as well as the City's multiple dwelling law, which requires a homeowner to obtain a permit from DOB before making significant property alterations.

SHANI, 36, of 84-24 Kew Gardens Road, Queens, a real estate agent, was charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a Class D felony. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to Acting DOB Commissioner Visconti and his staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Dennis Curran, DOI's Inspector General for DOB, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Joseph Ferraro, and Confidential Investigators Yves Desire and Mischa Perez-Fox.

The Office of Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorneys James Liander and Phyllis Weiss are assigned to handle the matter.

Members of the public are reminded that a complaint is merely an accusation and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial in which it is the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.