



# Department of Investigation

## *Press Release*

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### **PVO SCOFFLAW ARRESTED IN AUTO-RETRIEVAL SCAM** ***--Twice Stopped Payment On Checks Used To Clear "Frozen" Vehicle Registration & Get Impounded SUV --***

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the arrest of ARTHUR THOMPSON, a Spring Valley, New York, resident, for stealing \$3,038 and later attempting to steal another \$4,207, by stopping payment on 2 bank checks he had given to City Parking Violations Operations (PVO) to clear a "frozen" auto registration and to a Bronx City Marshal to retrieve his SUV—which had been towed and impounded because he owed the City over \$3,700 on 6 years of unpaid parking fines.

Commissioner Kuriansky said the investigation began in March, when Marshal George Airday notified DOI that THOMPSON had stopped payment on a \$4,207 bank check he had just presented to the Marshal's office to retrieve his SUV. DOI investigators subsequently learned that THOMPSON allegedly used the same scam in 1999 to stop payment on another \$3,038 bank check he had given to PVO to obtain a vehicle registration release.

The investigation disclosed that, on February 28, 2001, Marshal Airday towed THOMPSON's vehicle, a 2001 Nissan Pathfinder Sport Utility Vehicle, from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between 57<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> Street, in Manhattan for failure to pay PVO judgments totaling \$3,776 for 26 summonses. The tickets had been issued for various violations—including overtime meter parking, expired registration, and illegal parking in a no-standing zone—in Manhattan and the Bronx between February 1994 and May 2000.

The investigation further revealed that, on March 5, Marshal Airday's office in Riverdale told THOMPSON that, in order to get his SUV, he would have to pay—in cash or by bank check—a total of \$4,207 to satisfy all outstanding PVO judgments, marshal's fees, and towing and storage charges levied against the vehicle. The following day, THOMPSON obtained a \$4,207 bank check from First Union National Bank in Spring Valley, presented the check to Marshal Airday's office, and obtained a vehicle release receipt. THOMPSON then went to J&S Recovery & Storage Corporation's tow-pound at 2692 Bruckner Boulevard in the Bronx and retrieved his SUV.

Immediately thereafter, THOMPSON telephoned the bank and falsely claimed that he had lost the \$4,207 bank check. He then drove back to the bank, used a lobby phone to stop payment on the check, and subsequently filed a lost check affidavit requesting a full refund. On March 15, Marshal Airday's bank notified him that First Union bank had stopped payment on THOMPSON's check. Marshal Airday advised DOI's Marshals Bureau, which promptly alerted First Union bank, which, in turn, halted THOMPSON's refund.

During the investigation, DOI learned that, two years previously, THOMPSON, in April 1999, had

stopped payment on a \$3,038 Citibank bank check immediately after he had used it to pay PVO for judgments on 23 of the same summonses in order to obtain a release for his vehicle registration, which PVO had "frozen" because he was a scofflaw.

The investigation disclosed that THOMPSON, on April 27, 1999, bought a bank check in the amount of \$3,038 at Citibank's Allerton Avenue branch in the Bronx; went, the same day, to PVO's Bronx Help Center at 1400 Williamsbridge Road, where he lost an adjudication hearing at which he requested dismissal of the 23 tickets; paid PVO for fines and judgments related to the 23 summonses, using the \$3,038 bank check; and then returned to the bank branch, submitted a sworn written statement falsely claiming that he had lost the bank check, and requested a refund, which Citibank paid the following day.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, City Marshals are appointed by the Mayor to 5-year terms, are regulated by the DOI's Marshals Bureau, and earn income by performing certain tasks in New York City Civil and New York State Supreme Court cases, such as carrying out evictions, collecting money judgments, and towing cars whose owners owe PVO parking fines totaling more than \$230.

THOMPSON, 37, of 40 South Cole Avenue in Spring Valley (Rockland County), New York, was charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class D felony; Attempted Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class E felony; and Making An Apparently Sworn False Statement in the Second Degree (2 counts) and Obstructing Governmental Administration, both Class A misdemeanors. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to City Department of Finance (DOF) Commissioner Andrew S. Eristoff, Assistant DOF Commissioner Michael Phillips, and Marshal Airday, as well as members of their respective staffs, and First Union National Bank, and Citibank investigators, for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Marshals Bureau, including Chief Auditor Percy Corcoran, and NYPD Detective Eddie LeBron of the DOI Investigative Squad.

The Office of Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Daniel Wanderman is assigned to handle the matter.