



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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DOI Arrests Manhattan Landlord For Bribing Housing Inspector

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2000

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of NEFTALI GARCIA, an upper Manhattan apartment building owner, for paying a \$500 bribe to a City Department of Housing and Preservation Development (HPD) inspector. The payoff was allegedly in return for removing the pending housing code violations from City records.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "This arrest is part of DOI's ongoing effort to deter municipal corruption and should serve as a fair warning to any citizen who might even be tempted to bribe a City worker. In this case, the HPD employee who initially received the corrupt offer immediately reported it to DOI. His actions are to be commended. He represents the overwhelming majority of good, honest, and decent City employees."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI began an investigation in May following a "dismissal request" inspection of the vacant, 4-story, 16-unit building at 522 West 159th Street in upper Manhattan, which was undergoing extensive interior and exterior rehabilitation. Such inspections are requested by the property owner to confirm the correction of outstanding violations and to remove them from the record. In this instance, the landlord, GARCIA, allegedly offered the inspector a \$500 payoff to remove all existing housing code violations against the building. The inspector declined the money, and immediately reported the incident to DOI.

Thereafter, on May 19, DOI sent the same HPD inspector, wearing a concealed recording device, to conduct a re-inspection of the building. During the inspection, GARCIA allegedly handed the inspector \$500 in cash to remove all of the property's pending violations. The most serious of the violations included no proper secondary means of fire egress, no active gas service, no running water service, and major cracks in the rear bearing walls at the first- and second-story landings, Commissioner Kuriansky said.

ALIGN="justify" GARCIA, 30, of 648 Central Avenue in Scarsdale, New York, was charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a Class D felony, and Rewarding Official Misconduct in the Second Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by Brian D. Foley, DOI's Inspector General for HPD, and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General Daniel Alejandro and Special Investigator John Bavuso.

ALIGN="justify" The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Tyrone Hughes is handling the matter.