



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI ARRESTS MAN FOR OFFERING BRIBES TO BUILDINGS INSPECTOR

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner for the Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today's felony arrest of Ivan Betancur for bribing a Department of Buildings (DOB) inspector so a property he managed wouldn't receive construction and zoning violations.

Mr. Betancur, 54, of Flushing, Queens, has been charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a "D" Felony, punishable by up to seven years in prison.

DOI's investigation began after a DOB inspector reported that Mr. Betancur had offered a bribe so the inspector wouldn't report that the two-family home in Elmhurst had been illegally converted into a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) with 16 units. Mr. Betancur sent the building owner, who lives in Hawaii, the \$2000 rent each month but kept any other money he collected as profit.

On two occasions, in January and April 2003, Mr. Betancur offered bribes to the DOB inspector. During the first visit, the inspector refused the money and issued two violations: 1) Residence altered for occupancy by more than the legal amount; and 2) Work without a permit. In April, Mr. Betancur offered the DOB inspector, who was working with DOI, \$500 if he would not issue violations that would have resulted in what is known as a vacate order for illegal occupancy. Mr. Betancur told the inspector to come back another time so he could pay the inspector an additional \$500 if Betancur was given time to resolve the occupancy issue. The inspector accepted \$500 and turned it over to DOI investigators. A week later, a vacate order and violations were issued on the property, 95-23 41st Avenue, and the tenants were evacuated. DOB representatives provided residents with a list of City shelters where they could find housing.

"Mr. Betancur created hazardous living conditions so he could pad his own pockets with more money. We applaud the DOB inspector who immediately reported the attempted payoff to DOI," said DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn.

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn thanked DOB Commissioner Patricia J. Lancaster, AIA, as well as the DOB Office of Investigations and Discipline for their assistance and cooperation in this investigation. This case was investigated by DOI Assistant Commissioner Robert Roach, and members of his staff including Deputy Inspector General Joseph Ferraro and Confidential Investigator Eugenia Wells.

Said DOB Commissioner Lancaster, "Mr. Betancur's behavior is offensive on many levels. He jeopardized public safety to make a profit and compounded his error by trying to bribe a Department of Buildings inspector. We thank DOI for their successful pursuit of this offender."

Mr. Betancur will be prosecuted by Yvonne Francis, an Assistant District Attorney in the office of Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown.

Criminal Complaints are merely an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call 311 or DOI directly at (212) 825-5959.