



The City of New York
Department of Investigation
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DOI ARRESTS MAN FOR TRYING TO STEAL SOHO GRAND HOTEL

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of KOUADIO KOUASSI for allegedly filing a fraudulent deed with the New York City Department of Finance (DOF) that purported to transfer ownership of the SoHo Grand Hotel to himself. The market value of this property is approximately \$76 million dollars, according to DOF tax records.

KOUASSI, 46 of Brooklyn, New York, has been charged with Attempted Grand Larceny in the First Degree and two counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in jail.

KOUASSI allegedly filed a phony business certificate with the New York County Clerk's Office in an effort to establish a bogus business interest in the SoHo Grand Hotel. KOUASSI allegedly went to DOF to record a phony deed which transferred ownership of the SoHo Grand Hotel property to himself. KOUASSI's paperwork was not accepted because he did not have all of the necessary signatures and documents. When KOUASSI subsequently returned to DOF to see if his deed had been recorded, an alert DOF employee recognized that KOUASSI was attempting to transfer title of the SoHo Grand Hotel, became suspicious, and immediately notified DOI. In total, DOI's investigation revealed that KOUASSI made about five attempts to get this phony deed recorded. The SoHo Grand Hotel's true owners, the Hartz Group, unequivocally asserted that they did not know KOUASSI, nor did they ever sell or agree to sell the hotel to KOUASSI.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "This defendant foolishly thought he had engineered a clever and brash ruse to gain ownership of a significant commercial property. He may now find himself sleeping in less glamorous accommodations. I would like to commend the DOF employee who reported this matter to DOI."

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Department of Finance's Commissioner Martha E. Stark, and members of her staff, including the New York County City Register's Office for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation. Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked the true owners of the SoHo Grand Hotel for their cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner Robert Joyce, Inspector General Gia L. Morris, and Special Investigators Dalila Cummings, Byron Biggerstaff and Edward Richards. Assistant District Attorney Archana Rao from the New York County District Attorney's Office will prosecute the case against KOUASSI.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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To report someone ripping off the city, call DOI at (212) 825-5955