



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**STATEMENT BY DOI COMMISSIONER ROSE GILL HEARN ON THE DISMISSAL OF A
LAWSUIT BROUGHT BY RIKERS' INMATES WHO CAUSED SELF-INFLICTED GUNSHOTS
WOUNDS IN ORDER TO BLAME CORRECTION OFFICIALS**

Justice Alison V. Tuitt of the Supreme Court for the State of New York, Bronx County, last Friday (May 21, 2004) granted a motion made by City attorneys at the end of the plaintiffs' case and dismissed an action brought by two inmates who claimed to have been shot while incarcerated on Rikers Island in 1996. The City had defended the case on the grounds that the plaintiff's injuries resulted from their fraudulent effort to recover damages caused by their self-inflicted wounds.

Said DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn, "Seven years ago, the great investigative efforts of DOI unraveled this scheme to rip off the City as four inmates conspired to have a handgun smuggled into a Rikers Island jail facility so they could inflict gunshot wounds upon themselves in order to negotiate lenient prison sentences and sue the City for money damages. The inmates planned to blame Correction Officials for not protecting them from the smuggled gun. From the outset of the shootings, DOI began investigating how the gun was trafficked into the Correction facility. DOI conducted numerous interviews, including several by a DOI undercover investigator, who, on more than one occasion discussed with plaintiff Larry Browning gun trafficking and his role in connection with the Rikers Island shooting conspiracy.

DOI cracked the case wide-open when the girlfriend of one of the four inmates described the scheme to investigators. The woman said her boyfriend/inmate threatened to have her killed if she refused to smuggle the gun to him during visiting hours. The woman eventually acquiesced and told investigators she concealed the gun in her underwear when she entered the jail. The girlfriend pleaded guilty to charges that she smuggled the gun into the jail at his behest.

No DOC personnel participated in the scheme.

I am pleased to see that the City's pro bono counsel at Skadden Arps was able to persuade the judge that the lawsuit was absolutely without merit. Let this be a warning to other fraudsters -- your schemes will not work."

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. The agency's website is www.nyc.gov/doi.

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