



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**STATEMENT FROM DOI COMMISSIONER ROSE GILL HEARN ON THE INDICTMENT OF MAN WHO IMPERSONATED
A CONSUMER AFFAIRS INSPECTOR AND STOLE CASH FROM STORE OWNERS**

Today it was announced that JOSEPH RIOS, a former General Vendor licensed with the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), was indicted and charged Monday, April 10th in Kings County for allegedly posing as a DCA Tobacco Inspector in order to steal over \$5,250 in cash from four convenience stores in Brooklyn.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "DOI blew away the smoke screen this defendant used in his scheme to steal from unwitting store owners. Individuals impersonating any City inspector and trying to extort or steal money from the public will be investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of law."

RIOS, 52, of Brooklyn, was charged with Impersonation, Grand Larceny, Burglary and Petit Larceny. If convicted, he may face up to seven years in prison.

DOI's investigation began after several complainants informed investigators that a purported DCA inspector, using the names Mohammad Yusef and John Torres, was stealing money from behind their store counters from September 2005 to April 4, 2006 when RIOS was arrested. The investigation revealed that RIOS used what appeared to be a DCA identification card to pose as a DCA Inspector. Several complainants provided investigators with a description of RIOS.

DCA has a tobacco task force which conducts daily integrity tests throughout the five boroughs of New York City on businesses licensed by DCA to sell tobacco products. DCA issues business operating licenses to more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories, including convenience stores and cigarette sellers. DCA is responsible for issuing summonses for the illegal sale of cigarettes to minors.

RIOS has an extensive criminal record that began in 1975. His record includes a total of 19 convictions, including four felony convictions, one for Attempted Robbery in 1988, one for the Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in 1989, and two for Grand Larceny in 1994 and 2000, respectively. RIOS also has seven convictions for Criminal Impersonation.

If you suspect you are a victim of RIOS' scam or any similar scam involving a City employee, contact DOI at (212) 825-5959.

This investigation was conducted by Assistant Commissioner and DCA Inspector General Robert Joyce, and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General Mary Kozlow, Confidential Investigator Peter Kucharski and Special Investigator Don McNeil. The Office of the Kings County District Attorney is prosecuting the case and Assistant District Attorney Dan Blouin is handling the matter.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz and members of his staff for their cooperation and assistance during this investigation. Additionally, DOI thanks NYPD Detectives Thomas Smyth and Charlie Arnao of the 71st Precinct for their assistance with the arrest.

Criminal complaints are accusations. 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 DOI at (212) 825-5959.