



The City of New York
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NYC YELLOW MEDALLION TAXI DRIVERS CHARGED IN JFK RATE SCAM

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced a proactive integrity test conducted this week of yellow medallion taxi drivers, at the outset of the busy tourist season, to determine if taxi drivers would overcharge investigators posing as foreign tourists. Commissioner Gill Hearn announced that out of 24 integrity tests conducted, 13 taxi drivers engaged in violations, including overcharging the passenger. DOI initiated all of the integrity tests this week from John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) where DOI investigators posed as foreign tourists whose destination was the Waldorf--Astoria Hotel or the Brooklyn Marriott Hotel.

Two of the 13 taxi drivers were arrested for fraudulently charging the DOI undercover investigators more than 2.5 times the metered fare for trips to Brooklyn. The Queens District Attorney's Office will handle these prosecutions. Eleven other drivers who took up to \$20 more than the metered or fixed allowable rate for trips to Brooklyn and Manhattan will be referred to the Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) for administrative action, along with two drivers who failed to properly display their TLC license as required.

The arrested taxi drivers, EMMANUEL COTIN, 49, and SERGE J. FOUYOLLE, 60, both of Queens, were charged with Fraudulent Accosting and Petit Larceny, both Class A misdemeanors. If convicted, they each face up to one year in jail.

On Wednesday, June 7, 2006, DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the TLC conducted integrity tests of medallion taxi drivers in advance of the busy tourist season. Acting as non-English speaking passengers from various countries arriving on flights to JFK, the DOI undercover investigators got into randomly dispatched medallion taxis at JFK and requested, via a note to the drivers, to be driven to either the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Manhattan or the Marriott Hotel in Brooklyn. DOI found that the two arrested drivers, COTIN and FOUYOLLE took \$82.50 and \$65.50, respectively, above the metered fare for a trip to Brooklyn. The TLC immediately impounded their taxicabs. On 11 other occasions, drivers taking passengers to Brooklyn or Manhattan kept for themselves as much as \$20 above the applicable fare as a self-assessed "tip." Moreover, two other drivers violated TLC regulations by failing to properly display their TLC license. These 13 drivers will be referred to the TLC for administrative action.

Commissioner GILL HEARN said, "NYC's tourists deserve the welcome mat, not the door mat. Ripping off visitors to the City will not be tolerated and DOI plans to continue random integrity tests throughout the City during the busy summer tourist season."

District Attorney Richard A. Brown said, “For many foreigners and out-of-towners, their first experience with New York is the yellow cab that picks them up at the airport and takes them to their hotel. It is therefore unconscionable for drivers to take advantage of these unsuspecting passengers and charge them more than the legally allowed fare.”

Said TLC Commissioner/Chairman Matthew W. Daus, “These arrests send a most powerful message that taxi overcharges will not be tolerated under any circumstances. It will also remind drivers that, aside from the charges resulting from the arrest that these individuals will face, an overcharge of more than \$10 carries a penalty, upon conviction, of mandatory TLC license revocation. We are appreciative of the DOI’s actions, and aside from suspending their licenses immediately, will begin the appropriate revocation proceedings.”

DOI Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown for his office’s collaboration with DOI on this case, as well as the Port Authority Police and TLC Chairman Matthew Daus for their assistance in this effort.

This investigation was supervised by Timothy Crowe, DOI’s Inspector General for the TLC.

The Office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Daniel O’Leary is handling the matter.

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

*Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at 212-825-5959*