



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**BRONZE EAGLES STOLEN FROM CENTRAL PARK MEMORIAL IN THE 1970s
ARE RETURNED TO THE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced that two bronze eagles stolen more than 30 years ago from the City Employees War Memorial at the Mall in Central Park were returned this week to the City Department of Parks and Recreation (“DPR”). Their return came after a civil forfeiture action by the Office of the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. Federal agents seized the eagles in May 2008 after a confidential source told them about the eagles’ whereabouts.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, “This story, 30 years in the making, has a happy and just ending. The bronze eagles are now at their rightful home and, if they could speak, would have a fascinating tale to tell. I commend the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York and the Department of Parks and Recreation for their diligence in getting back these valued sculptures.”

Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe said, “After a 30-year flight, the eagles have landed. In the 1970s, eagles that were sculpted by artist Georg Lober for the City Employees War Memorial were stolen from Central Park at a time when crime and vandalism were rampant. Today the park is experiencing a renaissance and I am grateful to the U.S. Attorney’s Office and DOI for their assistance in recovering and returning two of these prized works of art.”

The bronze eagles had been part of Central Park’s City Employees War Memorial, which commemorated the heroism of City employees who fought in various wars. Sculptor Georg John Lober designed the memorial that was dedicated in 1926.

Their wayward journey began in the mid-1970s when they were used as a hiding place for drug dealers to stash drugs and money. At some point, the eagles were stolen from the Memorial in Central Park and stored at a home in the City until sometime in the 1990s when they were sold to an individual with an office in the City. In May 2008, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York tracked down the eagles in that office and seized them under a court order. They were returned to DPR this week.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Lev L. Dassin and his staff, especially Ronald G. Gardella, the Chief Investigator for the Law Enforcement Integrity Unit, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Lester; and DPR Commissioner Adrian Benepe and his staff, especially Director of Arts & Antiquities Jonathan Kuhn, for their joint efforts to ensure the safe return of the eagles.

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.

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