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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **City Correction Officer Charged With Promoting Prison Contraband For Allegedly Smuggling Tobacco to Rikers Island Inmates**

***Also Indicted On Charges of Bribe Receiving and Corrupting the Government;  
Payments Wired to Brooklyn Western Union Agent***

Brooklyn District Attorney Ken Thompson, together with New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters, today announced that a New York City correction officer has been indicted in connection with accepting more than \$8,000 in bribes for allegedly smuggling loose tobacco to inmates on Rikers Island.

District Attorney Thompson said, “This indictment, which is the very first time that charges have been brought under this new law anywhere in the state, shows our determination to thoroughly investigate and prosecute alleged acts of bribery committed by any public servant. The fact that a New York City Correction Officer on Rikers Island now stands accused of committing these serious crimes is even more troubling.”

Commissioner Peters said, “Contraband smuggling enables an underground economy that when left unchecked fuels violence and other illegal conduct. It undercuts integrity and safety. And it speaks to a fundamental breakdown in order that makes all other crimes more likely. DOI will continue its vigilance in this area and work with the Brooklyn District Attorney and fellow law enforcement partners to attack this serious crime, one that also undermines the effective and safe operation of our City’s jails.”

The defendant, Jorge Garcia, 51, was arraigned today before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Neil Firetog on an indictment in which he is charged with one count of third-degree corrupting the government, 14 counts of third-degree bribe receiving, one count of second-degree promoting prison contraband, one count of fifth-degree conspiracy and two counts of fraud; neglect of duty; willful violation of law relative to office. He was held without bail and will return to court tomorrow, August 20, 2015, for a bail determination. Garcia faces up to seven years in prison on the top count if convicted.

The District Attorney noted that the Corrupting the Government statute went into effect on April 30, 2014, and that it is being charged for the first time statewide with this indictment.

The District Attorney said that, according to the investigation, officials received a tip that Garcia was trafficking in tobacco and discovered that the defendant, who was assigned to the Anna M. Kross Center (AMKC is one of 10 jails on Rikers Island) solicited and accepted payments from inmates, via their friends, relatives and associates, in exchange for smuggling tobacco into the jail.

The District Attorney said that, according to the indictment, from January 4, 2014 to November 21, 2014, the defendant allegedly obtained \$8,600 in payments from 14 AMKC inmates whose relatives and associates paid Garcia using Western Union money transfers. Garcia allegedly collected a total of 64 money transfers at Davids Check Cashing on Myrtle Avenue, in Brooklyn, which is a Western Union agent.

The District Attorney further said that, according to the indictment, after smuggling the contraband tobacco into AMKC, Garcia provided it to the inmates for their own use or to resell to other inmates, engaging in a scheme to intentionally undermine and frustrate the New York City Department of Correction's ban on tobacco and fueling an underground economy on Rikers Island.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of Inspector General for DOC, specifically Assistant Inspector General Carmelo Galarza, under the supervision of First Deputy Inspector General Chin Ho Cheng, Senior Inspector General Jennifer Sculco, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Michael Carroll and First Deputy Lesley Brovner.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Meredith Weill of the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Emily Bradford, Deputy Bureau Chief and Assistant District Attorney Michael Spanakos, Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney William E. Schaeffer, Chief of the District Attorney's Investigations Division.

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**An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.**