



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

MARK G. PETERS
COMMISSIONER

80 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

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**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
NICOLE TURSO
(212) 825-5931**

**DOI ARRESTS THREE RESTAURANT OPERATORS ON BRIBERY CHARGES
IN AN ATTEMPT TO EVADE HEALTH CODE VIOLATIONS**

MARK G. PETERS, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI") announced the arrest of three restaurant operators on bribery and other charges as part of a series of undercover investigations that DOI conducted in the Bronx and Queens. The arrests took place on Monday, December 19, and today. According to the charging documents and DOI's investigations, the payoffs were allegedly given to a DOI undercover investigator posing as a Department of Health & Mental Hygiene ("DOHMH") inspector in return for ignoring multiple Health Code violations that were observed at the restaurants. In one instance, the restaurant operator asked the undercover investigator posing as an inspector to provide the restaurant with an "A" letter grade card. These investigations were all prompted by reports from City DOHMH inspectors who were offered bribes while inspecting the restaurants, declined the offers and then reported the incidents to DOI. The office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown and the office of Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark are prosecuting these cases.

DOI Commissioner Mark G. Peters said, "DOI's investigation found that these defendants were as dirty as their restaurants, offering bribes to health inspectors to look the other way at their eateries' unsanitary conditions, according to the charges. However, in New York City, you can't clean up a dirty restaurant with a bribe. DOI will continue to pursue unscrupulous business owners and operators who try to corrupt City employees for their own interests."

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown said, "The defendants in this case are accused of opting to buy off DOHMH inspectors rather than to maintain a clean and healthy dining environment for restaurant-goers. Underhanded bribery schemes and back door dealings have no place in Queens County. The defendants will be prosecuted and diners can rest assured that the dining grades posted at eateries are influenced only be legitimate inspections."

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark said, "Bronx restaurant patrons deserve eateries that are clean and abide by the city's health code. This defendant allegedly offered cash so a Department of Health inspector would ignore some of the unsanitary conditions, and this inspector wouldn't be bought."

The following three individuals have been charged:

- MORIE KABBA, 42, of the Bronx, N.Y., was arrested on December 19, 2016, and charged with two counts each of Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony, and Obstructing Governmental Administration in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year's incarceration. KABBA was arraigned Monday in

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Bronx Supreme Court, pleaded not guilty and was released on his own recognizance. He is next scheduled to appear in court on January 17, 2017.

According to the indictment and DOI's investigation, a DOHMH inspector was conducting a routine inspection of Jagana Family Kennedy Fried Chicken, located at 1375 Boston Road in the Bronx. After pointing out multiple Health Code violations to KABBA, the inspector was offered an unknown amount of cash. The inspector refused the offer and reported the incident to DOI. In October 2016, a DOI undercover investigator went into the restaurant posing as a DOHMH inspector and observed multiple violations including, uncovered garbage cans, multiple flies, and food residue on the floor. The undercover investigator told KABBA about the Health Code violations, and KABBA in return said he wanted the investigator to reduce the violations and gave him \$160 in cash.

- JONATHAN NIRANJAN, 28, of Richmond Hill, Queens, N.Y., was arrested on December 20, 2016, and charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, a DOHMH inspector was conducting a routine inspection of Amazura, located at 91-12 144th Place in Queens. While at the establishment, the inspector noticed a fish tank with a live lizard in it, which the inspector said would have to be removed. Before leaving the establishment, a worker told the inspector that the inspector had forgotten something in the bathroom. When the inspector went to the bathroom, he saw a wad of cash on top of the sink. The inspector did not take the money and reported the incident to DOI. In August 2016, a DOI undercover investigator went into the establishment posing as a DOHMH inspector and observed multiple violations including, a broken sink faucet, multiple flies, and staff touching food with their bare hands. The undercover investigator told NIRANJAN about the Health Code violations, and NIRANJAN in return asked the undercover investigator to save him on some of the violations so he would not get into trouble, and gave him \$300 in cash.

- MOHAMMAD SAFI, 62, of Woodbury, N.Y., was arrested on December 20, 2016, and charged with two counts of Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, a DOHMH inspector was conducting a routine inspection of Farm Fried N Curry Chicken, located at 120-20 Merrick Boulevard in Queens. After pointing out multiple violations, SAFI said he had something for the inspector to make it go away and handed the inspector an envelope. The inspector refused the envelope and reported the incident to DOI. In May 2016, a DOI undercover investigator went into the establishment posing as a DOHMH inspector and observed multiple violations including uncovered garbage cans, a broken sink faucet, and staff touching food with their bare hands. The undercover investigator told SAFI about the Health Code violations, and SAFI left and then returned, handing an envelope that contained \$200 in cash to the undercover investigator and asked him to give him an "A" despite the violations.

DOI Commissioner Mark Peters thanked the Bronx County District Attorney Darcel D. Clark, Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown, DOHMH Commissioner Mary Bassett, and their staffs, for their cooperation and assistance in this investigation.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH, specifically Confidential Investigators Steven Montague, Richard Park, and Anthony Ginyard, under the supervision of Inspector General Clinton Daggan, Associate Commissioner Susan Lambiase, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Michael Carroll, and First Deputy Commissioner Lesley Brovner. DOI's NYPD Detective Squad assisted in these investigations.

KABBA is being prosecuted by Bronx County Special Assistant District Attorney Katherine Hwang of the Public Integrity Bureau, with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Kiran H. Rosenkilde, under the supervision of Omer Wiczuk, Deputy Bureau Chief; Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Bureau Chief; and the overall

supervision of Stuart Levy, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division and Jean T. Walsh, Chief of the Investigations Division.

SAFI and NIRANJAN are being prosecuted by Queens County Senior Assistant District Attorney Theresa Smith and Assistant District Attorney Karlton Jarrett, respectively, of the Public Integrity Bureau under the supervision of James M. Liander, Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Linda M. Cantoni, Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney, and Peter A. Crusco, Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations.

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

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. 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. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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