



**Eric Gonzalez**  
Acting District Attorney

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
**KINGS COUNTY**  
350 JAY STREET  
BROOKLYN, NY 11201-2908  
(718) 250-2000  
WWW.BROOKLYNDA.ORG

**Press Office**  
718-250-2300

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, January 12, 2017

**Seven Defendants, including National Grid Employees, Charged with Enterprise Corruption for Operating Shadow Utility Company that Illegally Installed Gas Meters in Violation of Safety Protocols**

*Additional 30 defendants, including Landlords, Also Charged in Scheme*

Acting Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, together with New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters, today announced the indictment of a former National Grid employee who infiltrated the public utility and corrupted a number of its employees. He and other defendants are charged with enterprise corruption and related offenses for operating a shadow utility company that violated New York City Department of Buildings and National Grid regulations and procedures, installing illegal gas meters across Brooklyn for landlords willing to pay \$1,300 to \$2,500 per meter. A total of 37 defendants, including seven National Grid employees, have been charged in connection with the enterprise.

Acting District Attorney Gonzalez said, “We simply will not allow the lucrative real estate market in Brooklyn to feed criminal activity and potentially endanger lives. These defendants showed contempt for rules and regulations specifically put into place to protect public safety. And they did this with callous disregard on a regular basis. We will continue to protect Brooklyn residents by pursuing criminal prosecutions of landlords and others who put profits ahead of safeguards.”

Commissioner Peters said, “These defendants ignored safety for personal profit, skirting critical steps and undermining the gas authorization process, according to the charges. Our public report issued today demonstrates how this charged criminal enterprise took root, putting the safety of New Yorkers at risk, and sets out the reforms necessary to safeguard against similar activity in the future. I thank Acting District Attorney Gonzalez and his team of dedicated prosecutors for their partnership in this case, working with DOI to stop corruption of the gas installation industry in this City.”

The Acting District Attorney identified Weldon “Al” Findlay, 47, of Snyder Avenue, Brooklyn, as the alleged mastermind and leader of the enterprise. Findlay, who worked for National Grid until 2010, and six other defendants are charged with enterprise corruption, which carries up to 25 years in prison. The other 30 defendants charged in connection with the case

include landlords, property managers, and contractors who arranged for, installed, or received illegal gas service.

Some of the defendants were arraigned this morning before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Danny Chun on an indictment in which they are variously charged with enterprise corruption, first-degree falsifying business records, second-degree criminal tampering and second-degree commercial bribing. The defendants are being arraigned throughout the day on indictments in Brooklyn Supreme Court and others are being arraigned on felony complaints in Brooklyn Criminal Court.

See addendum for identities of other defendants charged in this case.

The Acting District Attorney said that, according to the indictment, the enterprise consisted of a pattern of criminal activity in connection with the illegal installation of gas meters in exchange for cash at 33 residential properties across Brooklyn, including Williamsburg, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Heights, Bushwick, Crown Heights, Midwood, and Borough Park, in addition to homes in parts of Queens. Findlay is alleged to have formed the enterprise, and to have directed its criminal activities throughout the period covered by the indictment, namely January 12, 2016 to June 30, 2016.

The Department of Buildings and National Grid have inspected every property identified in connection with the investigation, and ensured that there is no risk to public safety.

The Acting District Attorney said that existing protocols required National Grid employees opening accounts (for new or renewed gas service) to check the public Building Information System (BIS) database to confirm that the property had been inspected as required by the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB). A licensed master plumber or DOB inspector must visit the location and conduct appropriate testing to ensure that gas lines have been properly and safely installed; compliance is indicated by a control number created in the BIS database. A National Grid employee acting properly would check for the BIS number and then include it in the account record before dispatching a technician to install a meter and initiate gas service.

According to the investigation, when a landlord with a new or renovated apartment wanted to avoid either the expense of the required tests, or possible delays associated with compliance, the landlord contacted Findlay, who would arrange for illegal service through his criminal enterprise. Landlords could be confident that National Grid employees setting up the account and providing gas service would violate or ignore any rules or regulations that would prevent or delay the supply of gas.

It is alleged, based on physical and electronic surveillance, including court-ordered monitoring of text messages and phone conversations, that an owner or property manager needing a meter would text Findlay (for instance, “need one meter” or “need 3”) and send an address; Findlay would then text back a price, generally around \$1,500 per meter. If the owner agreed, Findlay set his criminal enterprise in motion:

- He asked for and received contact information for the person or business entity to be listed as the National Grid account holder.
- He texted that information to defendant Phoebe Bogan, a National Grid customer service representative in the Special Services Group, who worked in the main office at One MetroTech Center. (Findlay also used at least one other National Grid employee for this purpose when Bogan was not available.)
- Bogan then opened a new account (or modified an existing one) at the address Findlay provided. As a National Grid employee opening accounts, Bogan was required to check DOB's Building Information System (BIS) for each account she opened, ensure that the residence was approved for gas service, and include the BIS number in the account record. Bogan allegedly created accounts for residences that were not authorized by DOB to receive gas – in some instances, she even texted Findlay: “no BIS.”
- Initiation of gas service requires a technician to visit the location and install the meter. As alleged, Bogan dispatched particular technicians to Findlay's locations – usually defendants Joel Fils-aime and Alexie LaFleur, but also others – instead of assigning the jobs in the usual manner. Ignoring protocols, the technicians Bogan sent would begin gas service, even when the property had not yet been inspected. As National Grid began to provide gas service and bill the customer, Findlay paid Bogan and the others for their criminal conduct; allegedly, Bogan initially received \$200 per meter, but later more.

Three additional defendants, Rahsaan Rashidi, Ravindra Rattan, and Lawrence Berlianshik, are alleged to have operated as part of the enterprise. Rashidi was a superintendent for a number of buildings, while Rattan was a contractor and Berlianshik a property manager and owner. The three allegedly acted as brokers for Findlay, referring individual landlords to Findlay for illegal service by the enterprise. According to the investigation, the latter two defendants sometimes charged as much as \$2,500 per meter, a part of which they retained before passing the balance to Findlay.

Other National Grid employees are accused of supporting the operations of the enterprise. Rawle Dennis and Hector Yulfo, both National Grid Street Department employees, allegedly worked on main gas lines at unauthorized locations on two occasions. Naquan Francis, another technician, is accused of occasionally completing unauthorized work at the direction of Fils-aime. National Grid employee Joanne Wiltshire, a customer service representative, allegedly dispatched technicians if Bogan was not available.

Those four defendants, as well as 14 defendants who are property owners, managers or contractors, are charged in a separate indictment with first-degree falsifying business records and second-degree criminal tampering. The defendants affiliated with the properties are also charged with second-degree commercial bribing, while the employees (except Wiltshire) are also charged with second-degree commercial bribe receiving. Nine other defendants, also property owners, managers or contractors, were arrested on felony complaints.

Finally, three of the property owners and managers were separately charged by criminal complaint for hiring Findlay to illegally unlock meters at locations where National Grid had

terminated service. This would allow the residences to receive gas temporarily, at least until National Grid noticed the increase in gas usage and sent a technician to lock the line again.

The case was investigated by DOI, specifically, Chief Investigator James McElligott; Assistant Inspectors General Michael Antolini and Noah Mohny; and Deputy Inspector General Edward Zinser, under the supervision of Inspector General Gregory Cho, Associate Commissioner James J. Flaherty, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Michael Carroll and First Deputy Commissioner Lesley Brovner.

The Acting District Attorney thanked New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters and his staff for their work on this case. He also thanked the New York City Department of Buildings and National Grid for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The Acting District Attorney also thanked Investigative Analyst Megan Carroll, Financial Investigators Veronica Beltran and Marina Kuchmar, and Paralegal Roslyn Murrell, of the Brooklyn District Attorney's office for their assistance in the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Adam S. Libove of the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, with the assistance of Senior Assistant District Attorney Sara Walshe, Assistant District Attorney Renee Hassel and Assistant District Attorney Katherine Zdrojeski, under the supervision of 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, and Assistant District Attorney Patricia McNeill, Deputy Chief.

**Indictments and criminal complaints are accusatory instruments and not proof of a defendant's guilt.**

#

**Defendants Indicted for Enterprise Corruption:**

1. Weldon Findlay, 47, of Snyder Avenue, Brooklyn.
2. Phoebe Bogan, 41, of 149<sup>th</sup> Road, Rosedale, Queens.
3. Joel Fils-aime, 29, of Sunnyside Terrace, East Orange, New Jersey.
4. Alexie LaFleur, 28, of Hancock Street, Brooklyn.
5. Rahsaan Rashidi, 39, of Monroe Street, Brooklyn.
6. Ravindra Rattan, 50, of East 37<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn.
7. Lawrence Berlianshik, 26, of East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Brooklyn.

**Additional National Grid Employees Charged:**

1. Rawle Dennis, 40, of Parkside Avenue, Brooklyn.
2. Hector Yulfo, 29, of Highland Boulevard, Brooklyn.
3. Joanne Wiltshire, 46, of Paedergat 5 Street, Brooklyn.

4. Naquan Francis, 31, of St. Johns Place, Brooklyn.

**Landlords, Property Managers and Contractors Charged:**

1. Jonathan Ahdoot, 34, of Soundview Lane, Great Neck, New York.
2. Yoel Berkovitz, 36, of Lawrence Avenue, Brooklyn.
3. Moshe Bikel, 42, of Lee Avenue, Brooklyn.
4. Moses Englander, 30, of Division Avenue, Brooklyn.
5. Abraham Friedrich, 29, of Acres Road, Monroe, New York.
6. Gabriel Gallegos, 55, of Manhattan Avenue, Brooklyn.
7. Menachem Gross, 61, of Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn.
8. Pinchas Halperin, 31, of Throop Avenue, Brooklyn.
9. Cary Haynes, 45, of Pleasant Oak Court, Marietta, Georgia.
10. Tony Hiralall, 47, of 123<sup>rd</sup> Street, Ozone Park, Queens.
11. Yisroel Kanar, 31, of East New York Avenue, Brooklyn.
12. Trevor Leckie, 51, of Hancock Street, Brooklyn.
13. Moshe Mendlowitz, 27, of Quickway Road, Monroe, New York.
14. Shia Wolf Ostreicher, 58, of Keap Street, Brooklyn.
15. Issac Rosenberg, 28, of Lorimer Street, Brooklyn.
16. Hansraj Sampath, 31, of 109<sup>th</sup> Drive, Jamaica, New York.
17. Chaim Schwartz, 27, of Keap Street, Brooklyn.
18. Mendel Schwimmer, 31, of 55<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn.
19. Hershel Silberstein, 35, of Frankline Avenue, Brooklyn.
20. David Sinay, 27, of West Maple Avenue, Monsey, New York.
21. Ivor Stoddart, 53, of Madison Avenue, Brentwood, New York.
22. Leza Surujpaul, 28, of 214<sup>th</sup> Street, Queens Village, New York.
23. Samy Teitelbaum, 29, of 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, New York.
24. Hershel Weiss, 46, of Buchanan Court, Monroe, New York.
25. Josh Weiss, 33, of Webster Avenue, Brooklyn.
26. Issac Wolf, 23, of 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Brooklyn.

Note: to access materials presented in the press conference, scan QR code below.

