



Department of Investigation

Press Releases

DOI Arrests Midtown Manhattan Landlord For Bribing HPD Inspector

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2000 EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of ROBERT CHOU, a Manhattan building owner, for paying a \$300 bribe to an inspector from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), who was cooperating with DOI in an undercover investigation. The payoff was allegedly in return for removing all pending housing code violations on the property from the City's records.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "This arrest is part of DOI's ongoing effort to deter municipal corruption and should serve as a stern warning to any citizen who might even be tempted to bribe a City worker. In this case, the HPD inspector immediately reported the attempted payoff to DOI. His actions are to be applauded. He represents the overwhelming majority of good, honest, and decent City employees."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI initiated an investigation this past June when a housing inspector reported that, during an emergency complaint inspection of CHOU's 5-story building at 515 West 47th Street in Manhattan, he was offered a bribe by a building representative. The inspector refused the money and immediately reported the incident to DOI.

In August 1999, DOI sent another HPD inspector, wearing a concealed recording device, to conduct a re-inspection of the West 47th Street building. During the inspection, CHOU allegedly handed the inspector \$200 in cash to remove all of the property's pending housing code violations. The violations included citations for rodent and roach activity, accumulation of garbage in the basement, and failure to post a boiler room access notice.

CHOU, 65 of Manhattan N.Y., was charged with Bribery in the Third Degree. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by Brian D. Foley, DOI's Inspector General for HPD, and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General Daniel Alejandro and Special Investigator John Bavuso.

The Office of New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Berger is handling the matter.