



Department of Investigation *Press Releases*

DOI Arrest L.I. Painting Contractor For Forging NYCHA Bid Bond

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MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2000 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced that AFRO CONSTRUCTION, INC., a Long Island painting firm, and its president, FIROZ VISRAM, have been charged with submitting a forged bid bond to the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to obtain a \$175,000 contract to paint apartments at the Mott Haven Houses in the Bronx.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI began an investigation in 1997 after NYCHA officials became suspicious of VISRAM's bid bond during a routine verification process and notified DOI. As a result of the investigation, VISRAM, the lowest bidder, was not awarded the contract.

The DOI investigation disclosed that on September 2, 1997, VISRAM had submitted to NYCHA a document purporting to be a bid bond issued with respect to the Mott Haven Houses contract by the New York Surety Company of Great Neck, N.Y. (A valid bond was required to be submitted with the firm's bid, because the value of the contract was more than \$100,000). However, DOI determined that VISRAM had actually photocopied and altered the cover page of a bid bond issued to him six months earlier by the same surety company in connection with an unrelated NYCHA contract to paint apartments at the Cypress Hills Houses in Brooklyn.

VISRAM, 49, and AFRO CONSTRUCTION, INC., both of 910 Merrick Avenue, East Meadow, Long Island, were each charged with one count of Forgery in the Second Degree, a Class D felony punishable by up to 7 years in prison.

At their arraignment on Friday before Judge Brenda Soloff in Manhattan Supreme Court, both VISRAM and his firm pled guilty as charged. Sentencing was set for May 19. VISRAM faces up to 7 years in prison, and his company faces up to a \$10,000 fine.

The investigation was conducted by Steven A. Pasichow, DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Steven Gruberger and Assistant Inspector General John Kilpatrick.

The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Olivia Sohmer is handling the matter under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Blake Coppotelli, Chief of the Construction Industry Strike Force/Labor Racketeering Unit.