



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release #018-99

2 CITY CORRECTION OFFICERS GET 2 - 6 YEARS IN JAIL FOR TRYING TO SMUGGLE DRUGS TO RIKERS INMATES

THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 1999 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced that, as a result of two separate undercover investigations, RAFAEL LOPEZ and VICTOR CABRERA, Correction Officers formerly assigned to Rikers Island, have been sentenced in Bronx Supreme Court to 2 - 6 in prison for attempting to smuggle drugs into Department of Correction (DOC) facilities on Rikers Island. The defendants, who had each previously pleaded guilty to Attempted Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree, a Class C felony, were immediately remanded.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "The stiff sentences meted out to these two officers send a clear message that the smuggling of contraband into City jails will be sternly dealt with by the courts. It only takes one corrupt employee to endanger the safety of all personnel and compromise the security of a correctional facility. Fortunately, in both these cases, the schemes were uncovered before any drugs reached inmates' hands.

According to the charges filed against LOPEZ, on 3 occasions between February 6, 1997, and March 7, 1997, he met with a DOI undercover agent and was paid a total of \$1,100 in bribes to smuggle cocaine and marijuana to an inmate incarcerated at the James A. Thomas Center on Rikers Island. LOPEZ, 30, of Manhattan, had been a Correction Officer since January 24, 1991. He was arrested in June 1997 and sentenced earlier this week by Acting Supreme Court Justice Robert G. Seewald.

In the second case, CABRERA was accused of taking a total of \$200 in bribes on two occasions in December 1997 to smuggle cocaine to an inmate incarcerated at the West Facility on Rikers Island. CABRERA, 35, of the Bronx, had been a Correction Officer since July 1983. He was arrested in August 1998 when he attempted to apply for his pension, and was sentenced last week by Acting Supreme Court Justice Richard L. Price.

In developing these cases, Commissioner Kuriansky said that DOI's Inspector General for the Department of Correction acted on information from a variety of sources, including correction officers and other DOC staff. He also noted that the defendants, who had been suspended without pay at the time of their arrest, were summarily terminated upon sentencing.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his appreciation to DOC Commissioner Bernard B. Kerik and his staff for their assistance and cooperation during the course of the investigations.

The investigations were conducted by Michael Caruso, DOI's Inspector General for the Department of Correction, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Louis Marano, Assistant Deputy Inspector General Valerie Brown, Assistant Chief Investigator Frank Passarella, and Correction Officer

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Investigators Jose Ramos, Migdalia Figueroa, and George Santiago. Also assisting in the investigations was NYPD Detective Sue Cantatore, of the DOI Investigative Squad.

The Office of Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson prosecuted both cases.