



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release #049-2000

STOLEN CITY CHECK RING SMASHED

– DCAS Messenger And 3 Bronx Residents Charged In \$50,000 Theft

THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2000 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of EVERETT McDUFFIE, a municipal messenger, and 3 other persons for their participation in a scheme involving the theft of nearly \$50,000 in City-related checks or money orders.

McDUFFIE, a former WEP worker later employed full-time by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), is accused of taking 57 checks or money orders from mail he delivered for the agency. The stolen items, including checks or money orders payable to the City and checks issued by the City, were ultimately cashed at a discount at several small Bronx grocery stores.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "These arrests are part of DOI's ongoing effort to deter corruption and ensure trust and confidence in City government. Each check or money order was traced, and the paper trail eventually led back to McDUFFIE, whose conduct certainly reflects discredit on him but not on the overwhelming majority of City employees who serve with pride, dedication, and integrity."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DCAS routinely receives checks from private citizens as payment for the rental of City properties through the DCAS Division of Real Estate Services. The agency also receives money orders submitted by applicants for various civil service exams, and issues checks to City vendors.

Commissioner Kuriansky explained that DOI began an investigation in 1998, after being notified by DCAS of complaints involving missing checks and money orders. DOI determined that, between 1997 and 1998, 57 checks and money orders, totaling \$47,698.69 had disappeared. The missing items, in amounts ranging from \$30 to \$4,700, were then traced to the 3 co-defendants and others who had either negotiated or cashed them.

The investigation has led to a series of arrests, starting in May 1998, and ending with today's arrest of McDUFFIE.

The other defendants include:

- MARINO MATOS, 49, of the Bronx. On May 21, 1998, MATOS was arrested and charged with Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree. MATOS deposited 10 stolen checks, totaling \$21,669.79, into his bank account. He also negotiated 4 additional stolen checks, totaling \$2,435.82, through the bank account of a family member. On October 26, 1999, MATOS pled guilty to Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree and was sentenced to 3 years' probation.
- NICHOLAS CEREZO, 50, of the Bronx. On June 30, 1999, CEREZO was arrested and charged with Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree. CEREZO negotiated 6 stolen checks, totaling \$10,585.62. On November 15, 1999, CEREZO pled guilty to Petit Larceny. He was sentenced on January 24, 2000, to 3 years' probation and ordered to make restitution of \$10,000.
- DILSON PICHARDO, 38, of the Bronx. On February 14, 2000, PICHARDO was arrested and charged with Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree. PICHARDO negotiated 10 stolen checks, totaling \$4,664.97. He pled guilty on June 19, 2000, to Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree, and is awaiting sentencing.

McDUFFIE, 55, of Manhattan, was charged with Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree and Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, both Class D felonies, and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree and Petit Larceny, both Class A misdemeanors. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

McDUFFIE had been a Welfare Experience Program (WEP) worker with DCAS for approximately 5 years before being hired as a full-time City employee in April 1998. He was terminated on February 18, 2000.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to DCAS Commissioner William J. Diamond and his staff, the Department of Probation's Brooklyn and Manhattan Offices, and New York State Department of Labor Inspector General Brian Sanvidge, for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Robert C. Joyce, DOI's Inspector General for DCAS, and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General Mary Kozlow and Senior Investigator Cassandra Cameron-White, as well as Detective Angel LaPorte and members of DOI's Investigative Squad.

The Office of Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney David Hoovler of the Investigations Bureau is handling the matter.