



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release #034-2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2001

CONTACT: PATRICK CLARK (DOI)
(212) 825-593
BETSY HERZOG (QDA)
(718) 286-6315
FRANK GRIBBON (FDNY)
(718) 999-2025

FDNY INSPECTOR ARRESTED IN BRIBERY "STING"

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), RICHARD A. BROWN, Queens District Attorney, and THOMAS VON ESSEN, Fire Commissioner, today announced the felony arrest of LOUIS SMITH, a New York Fire Department (FDNY) inspector, for unlawfully giving a total of \$800 in cash payoffs to an FDNY supervising inspector working undercover for DOI. The payoffs were allegedly made to remove from FDNY's computerized Fire Prevention Information Management System (FPIMS) data about fire code violations issued to 2 adjacent auto repair garages, and to obtain a "torch" permit for a 3rd auto repair garage, all in Queens. FDNY supervising inspectors are authorized to make FPIMS data entries.

Commissioner Kuriansky said, "The FDNY supervising inspector here is to be commended for immediately notifying DOI of the bribe offer, and then effectively carrying out a key undercover role in an anti-corruption 'sting.' The fire inspector charged in this case not only disgraced himself, but betrayed the trust of his fellow employees and all New Yorkers."

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant is alleged to have betrayed the public's trust by bribing a supervisor into making fire violations disappear. By his alleged actions, he placed many people at tremendous risk by seeking to remove violations where unsafe conditions existed. His alleged actions can never be tolerated."

Fire Commissioner Von Essen said, "The Fire Department--as it did in this case--will utilize every resource available to aggressively pursue corruption or wrongdoing among any of its employees. I commend the work of the Supervising Fire Inspector and the investigators from the Department of Investigation for the swift actions that have resulted in this arrest."

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, an investigation began early last month, when an FDNY supervising inspector notified DOI that an FDNY inspector had offered him \$200 to record as having been corrected various violations against 2 auto repair garages.

The FDNY supervisor met with DOI investigators on June 6, the day after reporting the bribe offer, and then placed a recorded telephone call to SMITH to set up a meeting. The following day, June 7, SMITH met the supervisor, asked him to re-inspect Nagris Auto Repair at 126-30 Northern Boulevard and G & A Auto Repair at 126-32 Northern Boulevard, and then to report as "cured" the violations issued to them on May 29 for, respectively, improper spray paint storage and failure to have an auto repair shop Certificate of Occupancy (C of O). SMITH then gave the supervisor \$200 cash. The supervisor, on June 8, re-inspected G & A Auto Repair, and, subsequently, on June 15,

re-inspected Nagris Auto Repair.

The investigation further revealed that, on July 5, the FDNY supervisor met SMITH in a McDonald's restaurant parking lot on Conduit Boulevard in Queens, where SMITH gave him an additional \$400 to delete the 2 summonses from the City's computerized violation system. Today, the supervisor again met SMITH, who gave him \$200 to obtain a "torch" permit for RAJ Auto Center Corp., at 248-55 Jamaica Avenue in Queens, which would allow it to use welding equipment.

SMITH, 55, of 241-27 Caney Road in Rosedale, Queens, has been employed since 1994 as an FDNY inspector, earning a base salary of \$35,000 a year, and was assigned to FDNY District Office #13 at 91-45 121st Street in Richmond Hill, Queens. He has been suspended without pay.

SMITH was charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a Class D felony, and Official Misconduct, a Class A misdemeanor. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to Fire Commissioner Von Essen and members of his staff for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by John McMahon, DOI's Acting Inspector General for the Fire Department, and members of his staff, including Special Investigator Frank Smith.

The Office of District Attorney Brown is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Daniel O'Leary, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney James Liander, Chief of the DA's Integrity Bureau, is handling the matter.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.