



The City of New York
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**DOI STATEMENT ON FEDERAL ARRAIGNMENT OF MAN CHARGED WITH BRIBING A DOI INVESTIGATOR
POSING AS A "CLERK" FOR THE CITY ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL BOARD ("ECB")**

--Bribery scheme included a Yankee-Mets game ticket in exchange for resolving an ECB violation--

DOI began an undercover operation in June 2007 after a City Administrative Judge with the Environmental Control Board ("ECB") reported to DOI that she was offered Yankee tickets from an individual appearing before her in exchange for resolving an ECB summons on a Brooklyn building. DOI conducted an undercover operation and that individual, CELESTINO ORTA, 38, of the Bronx, was arrested in July 2007. On Thursday, February 7, 2008, ORTA was arraigned in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of New York on an indictment charging him with one count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 666 (a) (2) involving bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds, stemming from DOI's investigation and undercover operation.

The ECB is an administrative tribunal that hears cases involving violations of New York City's quality-of-life laws. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) pays for the ECB's operations and those who work for ECB are DEP employees.

After the judge referred the case to DOI, a DOI undercover posing as an ECB "clerk" accepted tickets to the game. The DOI undercover attended the Yankee-Mets game and ORTA asked the undercover if the undercover could remove other ECB violations for private individuals or companies in exchange for half the money the individual or company owed the City. As a result, DOI, with the assistance of the ECB, set up a fake business with "outstanding" violations.

According to the indictment and DOI's investigation, in July 2007, the ECB "clerk" provided ORTA with the ECB violations that the fake business was issued, which totaled more than \$33,000 in outstanding judgments. ORTA approached a "representative" of the business, actually a DOI undercover, and brokered a deal where the "representative" agreed to pay ORTA \$15,000 once ORTA could show that the company's ECB records were successfully changed to reflect that the ECB judgments against it had been satisfied. Subsequently, ORTA met with the business "representative," provided proof that the judgments were satisfied and the "representative" paid ORTA \$15,000. ORTA split the \$15,000 with the ECB "clerk."

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Individuals who think they can brazenly pay off City officials to evade violations and fines should know they risk arrest and prosecution. I commend the ECB judge for alerting DOI."

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked the ECB, the FBI, and Benton J. Campbell, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, for their assistance in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of Inspector General for DEP, including Confidential Investigators Zeola Fox and Max Adler, under the direction of Inspector General Michael Carroll and Deputy Inspector General Michael Healy.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Brownell of the Eastern District of New York is prosecuting the case.

Indictments are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**