



Release #049-99

**NYPD TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT AGENT ARRESTED
FOR SELLING HANDICAPPED PARKING PERMITS**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1999 -- EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), together with Brooklyn District Attorney CHARLES J. HYNES and New York City Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner HOWARD SAFIR, today announced the felony arrest of ANGEL TORRES, a Traffic Enforcement Agent (TEA), for illegally selling parking permits for the disabled. In carrying out his scheme, TORRES allegedly would take expired Department of Transportation (DOT) permits and fraudulently alter their printed expiration dates before selling them.

Commissioner Kuriansky explained that a New York City DOT Parking Permit for People with Disabilities allows a motorist, who lives, works, or attends school in the City and has been certified as disabled by a City physician, to park at most curbsides on city streets. Such a placard is required to be displayed in full view on the driver's side dashboard. Although the permit contains certain restrictions, a disabled person with such a permit may generally park in the following zones: No Parking, No Standing Except Trucks Loading Or Unloading (except for specified restricted hours), Metered Parking (without depositing a coin), and No Parking Except Authorized Vehicles. The permit must be renewed annually.

The year-long investigation, which is continuing, began when the Department of Finance's Parking Violations Operation notified DOI that 18 separate motorists had submitted copies of altered DOT handicapped parking permits in efforts to have more than \$1,600 in parking summonses improperly dismissed. Once DOI determined that TORRES was the individual selling the phony permits to members of the public in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, the area to which he was assigned to work as a TEA, a joint investigation was initiated with the NYPD's Internal Affairs Division (IAD).

In July 1999, a DOI undercover, posing as a non-disabled businessman tired of getting parking tickets, met with TORRES in Brooklyn and paid him \$300 for an altered handicapped permit. At a meeting later that month, the undercover gave TORRES another \$300 as a down payment for two additional permits and agreed to act as a "middleman" between TORRES and other members of the public he knew who might be interested in purchasing the fraudulent permits.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to Department of Finance Commissioner Andrew S. Eristoff and City Department of Transportation Commissioner Wilbur L. Chapman and their staffs for their assistance and cooperation during the course of the investigation.

TORRES, 62, of Ozone Park, Queens, was arrested near his home today by DOI and IAD officers. TORRES, who has been employed as a Traffic Enforcement Agent for 10 years, was suspended without pay.

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TORRES was charged with 2 counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and 3 counts of Official Misconduct. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and Inspector General for the Department of Finance Vincent E. Green, members of his staff, and Assistant Inspector General John M. Bellanie, of the DOT Inspector General's Office. Also assisting in the investigation were Captain John Kelly, Lieutenant Thomas Harris, and Sergeant Mark Dipierro, of the NYPD's Internal Affairs Division .

The Office of Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Joseph A. DiBenedetto, of the District Attorney's Rackets Bureau, is handling the matter under the supervision of Deputy District Attorney Jay Shapiro.