



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN ARREST OF DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION CAPTAIN
ON A CHARGE OF STEALING \$40,000 IN ALLEGED INVESTMENT RUSE**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrest of a Captain with the City Department of Correction ("DOC") on a charge of stealing \$40,000 from an individual as part of a purported investment agreement. DOI initiated its investigation after the victim reported the incident to DOC, which then alerted DOI. The Office of Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz is prosecuting this matter.

STEVE FRANCOIS, 43, of Jamaica, N.Y., is charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison. FRANCOIS was arrested on April 4, 2022 and given a Desk Appearance Ticket to return for arraignment in Queens Criminal Court on Sunday, April 24, 2022. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and scheduled to return to court on June 21, 2022.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "As alleged in the complaint, this defendant promised to profitably invest the victim's \$40,000 but stole the funds instead, enriching himself at the victim's expense and breaking the law. This defendant is a high-ranking member of DOC's supervisory staff whose integrity must be a top priority. I thank the Queens District Attorney's office and the City Department of Correction for their partnership on this investigation."

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz said, "Financial crimes can be devastating for victims and could lead to economic ruin. I want to thank the City Department of Investigation and all those involved in bringing this case to my Office. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to right the wrongs of all who have been victimized."

DOC Commissioner Louis A. Molina said, "Integrity is the most important quality that a law enforcement official must have, and when they betray someone's trust, they fail that person and the agency they represent. We will not tolerate this type of alleged disgraceful behavior and if this individual is found guilty, they will be disciplined and face termination. I would like to thank the Department of Investigation and the Queens District Attorney's office for their support."

According to the criminal complaint and DOI's investigation, the victim agreed, by written contract, to invest \$40,000 with FRANCOIS with a return of \$15,000. The \$55,000 total was due to the victim in October 2021. On September 3, 2021, the victim met with FRANCOIS outside his Queens County residence and provided FRANCOIS with a \$40,000 cashier's check. On December 21, 2021, after FRANCOIS gave conflicting responses to the victim's inquiries about the status of her money, FRANCOIS sent the victim a funeral announcement and pictures of a man in a coffin, telling the victim that the man they were doing business with was deceased and the victim's money would not be returned. DOI investigators reviewed bank records from an account in FRANCOIS's name, which revealed that FRANCOIS deposited the \$40,000 cashier's check into his account on September 4, 2021; and that between September 8 and September 10, 2021, FRANCOIS withdrew a total of \$39,937.43 from the same account. FRANCOIS did not have permission and authority to take, use, possess or remove the \$40,000 that was provided to him by the victim by false pretenses. During the time of the incident, between September and December 2021, FRANCOIS was on sick leave from DOC.

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FRANCOIS, who was suspended on the date of his April 4th arrest, has been employed by DOC since May 2013 and receives an annual base salary of approximately \$96,208.

Commissioner Strauber thanked Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz and her staff for their partnership in this investigation and prosecution of this matter; and DOC Commissioner Louis A. Molina, and his staff, for their referral and cooperation in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Correction, specifically DOC Captain Lawrence Bond and Correction Investigator Ernesto Gonzalez, under the supervision of Inspector General Whitney Ferguson, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

The case is being prosecuted by the Queens County District Attorney's Office, specifically Assistant District Attorney Leann Staines, under the supervision of Joseph Conley, Chief of the Frauds Bureau.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. 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. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.

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