



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**NEW JERSEY MAN CONVICTED OF SCHEME TO DEFRAUD NYC DURING PANDEMIC SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS PROBATION, 600 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE AND AN \$8,000 FINE**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on today’s sentencing of RONALD ROMANO, 60, to five years of probation, 600 hours of community service, and an \$8,000 fine. ROMANO pleaded guilty in May 2022 to conspiring to violate the Defense Production Act, a misdemeanor, in connection with a scheme to supply Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”) to New York City that he did not possess or have authority to sell, at a substantial mark-up. ROMANO, a used car dealer from Manalapan, N.J., engaged in this illegal conduct during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when the City of New York was urgently seeking this essential equipment to protect its frontline workers. Today’s sentencing took place in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York before U.S. District Judge Andrew L. Carter, Jr. DOI investigated this matter in partnership with the office of Damian Williams, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Mr. Romano exploited this City’s need for PPE during a worldwide health crisis to turn a personal profit at public expense. But sharp-eyed City procurement specialists, DOI, and federal prosecutors thwarted his criminal scheme and, as a result, Mr. Romano has a federal conviction and other significant penalties as a result of his effort to defraud New York City. DOI and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York are committed to pursuing schemes that jeopardize the health and safety of New Yorkers and taxpayer funds.”

According to the indictment, between February 2020 and April 2020, ROMANO participated in a scheme to price gouge the City of New York in the early months of the pandemic by making false and fraudulent statements to induce the City to pay more than \$45 million for what ROMANO represented to be 3M-brand N95 respirators, an amount more than 400% above the list price for such respirators. As of March 25, 2020, certain PPE, including those N95 respirators, were designated as scarce materials under the Defense Production Act. At the time of the scheme, the City of New York was in critical need of lifesaving PPE. The false statements included ROMANO’s submission of a document to the City that identified a fictitious PPE deal with the Florida Division of Emergency Management in which ROMANO claimed to be involved.

ROMANO was charged in May 2020 and you can read that release here: [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/May/13RomanoGP05\\_31\\_2022.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/May/13RomanoGP05_31_2022.pdf). ROMANO pleaded guilty in May 2022; and that release can be read here [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2020/May/RonaldRomano\\_arrest\\_PR\\_final.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2020/May/RonaldRomano_arrest_PR_final.pdf).

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams, and his staff, for their partnership and successful prosecution of this matter. The investigation was handled by Assistant United States Attorneys Nicholas W. Chiuchiolo and Timothy V. Capozzi of the Complex

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Frauds and Cybercrime Unit in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. At DOI, the matter was investigated by Assistant Inspector General Anastasia Plakas, under the supervision of Inspector General Ann Petterson, in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

*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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