



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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DOI RE-ARRESTS LONG ISLAND WOMAN IN \$6,000 BAIL REFUND SCAM

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of REINA ESPINAL, a West Babylon, New York resident, for attempting to steal \$6,000 bail that a family friend had posted for her and her son by filing a forged refund request letter with the City Department of Finance (DOF) stating falsely that the friend wanted his refund checks to be issued to ESPINAL. ESPINAL surrendered last week to DOI investigators.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said that DOF's Bureau of Treasury issues approximately 2,000 bail refund checks each month to individuals who post cash bail for defendants, once those defendants' cases have been resolved. Last year DOF disbursed about \$41 million in bail refund checks.

DOI first arrested ESPINAL on May 2, 2001, for attempting to steal \$2,500 bail posted for ESPINAL's son, Alexi Espinal, by his wife, Annette Espinal. In that case, REINA ESPINAL submitted a fraudulent letter to DOF, bearing the forged purported signature of her daughter-in-law, requesting the reassignment of the bail refund to ESPINAL. On October 30, 2001, ESPINAL pled guilty to Attempted Petit Larceny and was sentenced to a year of probation.

In its continuing investigation, DOI learned that another letter, dated May 24, 2000, had been submitted to DOF, supposedly signed by Yuniur Nunez, a friend of ESPINAL'S son Alexi, requesting that DOF issue bail refund checks to ESPINAL for two bail payments, in the amounts of \$2,500 and \$3,500, that Nunez had posted for ESPINAL and Alexi in connection with a 1998 Queens drug case, in which they had both been arrested. The letter, supposedly signed by Nunez, requested that DOF mail the refund checks, payable to ESPINAL, to ESPINAL's home at 715 Albin Avenue in West Babylon, New York.

The investigation revealed, however, that ESPINAL, not Nunez, had submitted the letter to DOF and had signed a separate DOF form falsely verifying the letter's signature and instructions. Nunez told DOI investigators that he had not written, signed, or authorized the letter to DOF and had not authorized ESPINAL to receive his bail refund check.

ESPINAL, 52, of 715 Albin Avenue in West Babylon, New York, a factory worker, has been charged with Forgery in the Second Degree, a Class D felony, and Attempted Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, both Class E felonies. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Gill Hearn expressed her sincere appreciation to DOF Commissioner Martha E. Stark and members of her staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

DOF Commissioner Martha E. Stark said, "I commend the staff of our Treasury Division, who alerted DOI to the irregularities in these forged letters, and I am gratified that DOI pursued the case to its successful conclusion."

The investigation was conducted by Vincent E. Green, DOI Assistant Commissioner and Inspector General for DOF, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Maureen Thomas-Lewis, and Special Investigators Jeffrey Dolcimascolo and Belarminia Ortiz.

The case will be prosecuted by the Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau.

The charge is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted in court.