



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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Release #40-2008
nyc.gov/html/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2008**

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**DOI ARRESTS MAN ON A CHARGE HE STOLE APPROXIMATELY \$40,500
IN SECTION 8 SUBSIDIES INTENDED FOR HIS DECEASED MOTHER
--Arrest is DOI's fourth this year as part of "Death Match" investigation--**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced the arrest of KOON SO on a federal theft charge of illegally collecting \$40,505 in Section 8 housing subsidies intended for his deceased mother. According to the criminal complaint, SO received those benefits for more than 18 months after his mother died and during that time told the building's manager that his mother was out of the country and too sick to file required recertification papers.

SO, 50, of Brooklyn, has been charged with violating 18 U.S.C. §641, theft of government funds. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison.

The Section 8 Rental Assistance Program is a federal government program for helping low-income individuals to afford housing in the private market. A housing subsidy is paid each month directly to the landlord on behalf of the participating individual. That subsidy makes up the difference between what the Section 8 tenants can afford and the total rent charged by the Section 8 landlords. In this case, the Section 8 housing subsidies were administered by the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The following is a synopsis of the criminal complaint: For several years before her death in November 2004, SO's mother was a Section 8 recipient and a tenant at the Cooper Square Apartments in Manhattan. At the time of her death, she was the only authorized tenant of the Section 8 apartment. In 2005, after the building manager sent SO's mother a notice that her annual recertification was due, SO told the manager that his mother was sick and in China. The building manager agreed to process the recertification without SO's mother's signature. In 2006, the building manager once again sent a recertification form, and SO said his mother was ill. The building manager, who saw SO in the apartment, refused to process that recertification without SO's mother's signature. SO, who was not an authorized tenant, vacated the apartment in the summer of 2006, but had already illegally received \$40,505 in Section 8 subsidies that had been paid on his mother's behalf between November 2004 and July 2006.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Collecting housing subsidies under false pretenses is illegal. DOI will continue its efforts to protect these much-needed funds and ensure that only eligible individuals receive them."

Today's arrest stems from DOI's comparison of Social Security death records with Section 8 rent rolls to determine whether HDC-administered subsidies were being paid for individuals who had died. As a result of the investigation, since January 2008, DOI has arrested four individuals on similar housing fraud charges. The following information concerns the three previous arrests:

- On January 29, 2008, CYNTHIA ORTIZ, 31, of the Bronx, was arrested and charged with a federal felony in violation of 18 U.S.C. §641, theft of government funds. The following is a synopsis of the criminal complaint: ORTIZ's grandmother, a Section 8 tenant in a Bronx apartment, died in July 2004. Eight months later, in April 2005, ORTIZ applied to become an authorized tenant of that apartment. Documents that her grandmother had purportedly signed in April 2005 were submitted in support of ORTIZ's application and, as a result, ORTIZ was permitted to move into the apartment in July 2005. The investigation found that the purported signature of ORTIZ's grandmother on documents dated April 2005 appeared different from her signature on documents signed before her death. Based on those documents, between July 2005 and January 2008, ORTIZ collected approximately \$11,880 in Section 8 subsidies to which she was not entitled. The office of Michael J. Garcia, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, is prosecuting the case, which has been assigned to Assistant U.S. Attorney Nick Lewin.
- On February 14, 2008, RONALD MONROE, 38, was arrested and charged with Forgery in the Second Degree and Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, class D felonies, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony. The following is a synopsis of the criminal complaint: MONROE forged his deceased mother's signature on a power of attorney that would have given him succession rights to her subsidized apartment in Staten Island after her death. As a result, between October 2005 and July 2006, approximately \$7,180 in Section 8 subsidies was paid to the management company for the Section 8 apartment. Conviction of a class D felony can result in a sentence of up to seven years in prison. The Office of Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan Jr. is prosecuting the case, which has been assigned to Assistant District Attorney Jeff Curiale.
- On February 20, 2008, MAIDE JIMENEZ, 50, of Brooklyn, was arrested and pleaded guilty to a federal misdemeanor theft charge, 18 U.S.C. §641, theft of government funds for stealing Section 8 benefits valued at up to \$1,000. The following is a synopsis of the arrest warrant affidavit: JIMENEZ submitted a social security number on documents for a Section 8 subsidized apartment in Brooklyn. The investigation found that the social security number was never assigned to JIMENEZ but had been assigned to an individual who died in 1998. As a result, between June 2003 and July 2007, JIMENEZ collected approximately \$68,000 in Section 8 subsidies that she was not entitled to receive.

JIMENEZ is awaiting sentencing on May 28 and has agreed to pay restitution of approximately \$68,000. Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Lanpher at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York is prosecuting the case.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanks HDC President Marc Jahr and his staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Inspector General Joseph P. Piazza, Special Counsel Catherine Riccards and Chief Investigator Bella Ortiz.

The office of Michael J. Garcia, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, is prosecuting the SO case, which has been assigned to Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeff Alberts.

Criminal complaints and arrest warrant affidavits 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.

**Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.**