



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

MARGARET GARNETT
COMMISSIONER

180 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

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CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
NICOLE TURSO
(212) 825-5931

DOI ISSUES CALENDAR YEAREND 2020 STATISTICS
–Most annual indicators were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic–

Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced today the agency’s statistics for Calendar Yearend (“CY”) 2020, numbers that demonstrate the consequential impact that COVID-19 had on the ability to conduct investigations, advance criminal matters in the courts, and generate complaints into the agency. The shuttering of the City, including the courts, and the critical need to reduce human interaction for everyone’s health had a substantial impact, as did the ensuing fiscal crisis, which imposed a hiring freeze and required DOI to furlough nearly all of its investigative employees one day per month in the final quarter of 2020. Despite the obstacles presented by COVID-19, DOI continued to open and conduct investigations, move as many cases as was possible through the criminal justice system, and even saw an uptick in the number of civil and administrative referrals made by investigators. DOI also provided its vendor name check expertise, where requested, on the City’s emergency procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”).

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, “2020 was a year of loss and great challenges, and truly incomparable to prior years. Our yearend numbers reflect the stark impact that COVID-19 safety mandates, closures, and other consequences had on DOI’s investigations. However, they also tell the story of perseverance, a commitment to DOI’s mission, and the unbreakable spirit of this City. These numbers are a testament to what we *can* do in the face of overwhelming difficulty. For DOI, that meant continuing to protect the City from corruption, fraud, waste, and abuse through investigations, arrests and recommendations for agency reform; offering our vendor name check services to agencies making emergency procurements of vital PPE during the height of the pandemic; and working with our partners to safeguard the City from those trying to capitalize on the tragedy and desperation of the moment. I am proud of DOI’s work and the resiliency and dedication of all of the agency’s staff.”

Specifically in CY 2020, DOI:

- Made 325 arrests resulting from investigations, approximately 51% less than in CY 2019, when DOI made 667 arrests.
- Received 10,883 complaints, a 24% decrease from the 14,329 complaints received in CY 2019.
- Carried a docket of 1,677 investigations, about 15% less than the 1,981 caseload the agency carried in CY 2019.
- Closed 1,029 investigations; a 12% decrease from the 1,167 investigations closed in CY 2019.
- Issued 366 policy and procedure recommendations compared to 528 recommendations issued in CY 2019.
- Referred 1,002 matters for civil and administrative action, 6% more than it did the previous calendar year.

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When emergency protocols were invoked in mid-March 2020, like most other City agencies, DOI immediately transitioned to remote work, bringing some staff back on a rotating basis in the summer. DOI continued to work steadily through the pandemic, and is currently operating with employees working remotely and rotating into DOI's headquarters in Lower Manhattan.

Below are some highlights from 2020. To view more on each matter, click on the headline or the designated link in the text:

DOI REPORTS AND INITIATIVES

- **[DOI's Investigation and Report on the Response by the New York Police Department \("NYPD"\) to the George Floyd Protests](#)**
DOI conducted an investigation into the response of the NYPD to the George Floyd protests between May 28, 2020, through June 20, 2020, focusing on the NYPD's institutional and operational response, including but not limited to its planning, strategy, enforcement actions, intelligence collection and dissemination, training, and police-community relations. As part of the investigation, DOI also examined the history and current structures of civilian police oversight in New York City. The Report made 20 recommendations to the NYPD to improve their response to mass protests and two recommendations regarding streamlining and improving police oversight in the City. After the Report's issuance, the Mayor agreed with the recommendations, and the Police Commissioner stated that he would incorporate them into future policy and training. DOI asked that NYPD report to the public on its response to these recommendations and any additional changes within 90 days of the Report.
- **[Gaps found in City Environmental Control Board \("ECB"\) Enforcement and Collection](#)**
DOI completed an investigation into the ECB summons enforcement and collection, which identified numerous gaps undermining the collection process and impeding the collection of a significant amount of valuable City revenue. DOI worked with the City Department of Finance to increase ECB debt collection, resulting in six recommendations for reform, including standardizing and expanding the use of a centralized database allowing all City agencies to efficiently share City-owned information that is relevant to the issuance and enforcement of ECB Summonses.
- **[Lead Abatement Violations at the New York City Housing Authority \("NYCHA"\)](#)**
Working in partnership with the Criminal Investigation Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of the Inspector General, DOI found NYCHA had been extensively violating EPA's lead abatement regulations since at least 2013 and continuing through 2018. Among other failures, the investigation found that none of NYCHA's lead abatement jobs during this period were supervised by an EPA-certified lead supervisor.
- **[Advancing Transparency through DOI's Public Website](#)**
Just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, DOI created a digital portal on its public website that provides access to the agency's policy and procedure recommendations ("PPRs") issued since 2014. The PPR Portal allows users to view DOI's PPRs, to which agencies they were issued, and the status of the PPRs. The PPR Portal currently consists of more than 4,700 recommendations and continues to be updated on a quarterly basis.

DOI's COVID-19 RESPONSE

- **[Investigating Attempt to Capitalize on the City's Desperate Need for PPE](#)**
A joint investigation by DOI and the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York led to charges against a New Jersey man for attempting to deceive and price gouge the City into paying him and his co-conspirators \$45 million for PPE he did not possess and wasn't authorized to sell. The defendant was charged with conspiring to commit wire fraud, wire fraud and conspiring to violate the Defense Production Act. The good news: Skeptical City procurement specialists at the City's Department of Citywide Administrative Services called the supposed manufacturer to confirm the astronomical asking price and the defendant's scheme soon came to an end.

- **[Offering DOI's Vendor Name Check During Emergency Procurements](#)**
When the Mayor issued Executive Order (“EO”) 101, suspending the regular procurement rules to expedite emergency procurement, DOI proactively reached out to City agency contracting officers and to the Mayor’s Office of Contracting Services (“MOCS”). For agency contracting officers, DOI offered to do its usual vendor name checks on an expedited basis, even though the Mayor’s EO suspended the requirement for these name checks. DOI outlined its efforts as part of testimony provided to City Council on the City’s pandemic emergency contracting.

DOI INVESTIGATIONS

- **[Allegations of Evidence Tampering and Falsifying Reports](#)**
DOI worked with the Bronx District Attorney’s Office on an investigation that resulted in the indictment of three Department of Correction (“DOC”) Officers on charges of attempted assault, evidence tampering, and falsifying reports related to an altercation with three 17-year-old detainees at the Horizon Juvenile Center in the Bronx, a facility for pre-trial detention of 17-year-old defendants. The officers are charged with punching a resident in the face, placing that resident in a chokehold, and later, disposing of evidence of the assault. The officers are due in court on March 4, 2021. They have each been suspended by DOC.
- **[Fraudulent and Forged Parking Placard Probes](#)**
 - An Assistant Commissioner with the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development was charged with possession of a fraudulent parking placard and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license. The defendant served 20 hours of community service and pleaded guilty to the violation of disorderly conduct. The defendant was demoted as a result of her arrest. [To read more, click here.](#)
 - A joint investigation with the Bronx District Attorney’s Office led to the indictment of five people, including four DOC Officers, on using forged disability parking placards. According to the investigation, one of the DOC Officers sold forged placards, taking payments between \$200 and \$280 per placard. The defendants are due back in court on March 16, 2021. [To read more, click here.](#)
- **[Construction Investigations, Prevailing Wage, and Worker Rights](#)**
 - A Queens’ contracting company was indicted on charges of grand larceny, failure to pay prevailing wages, and scheme to defraud for underpaying at least 11 employees more than \$1.5 million in wages for work on public works projects in New York City public schools. The company and its owner pleaded guilty to violating prevailing wage labor laws. As part of the negotiated plea, the owner was required to make full restitution and will reimburse the City approximately \$160,000 to cover the cost of the investigation. DOI worked with the Queens District Attorney’s Office on this matter. [To read more, click here.](#)
 - An insurance broker pleaded guilty to participating in an extensive insurance fraud scheme that included false information provided to insurance carriers to avoid more than \$1 million in insurance premiums, an action that left more than 100 construction workers underinsured. As part of the plea agreement, the broker was required to pay \$100,000 to the New York State Insurance Fund and was sentenced to three years’ probation, 800 hours of community service, and the permanent surrender of his insurance broker license. DOI worked with the Office of the Manhattan District Attorney on this investigation. [To read more, click here.](#)
 - The owner of a construction company pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud for orchestrating a scheme to defraud the City School Construction Authority (“SCA”) by failing to pay the prevailing wage to his workers. As part of a plea agreement, the owner agreed to pay \$666,219 in restitution to six of his employees and their unions and agreed to forfeit \$510,000 and pay an additional \$48,330 to the SCA. The defendant will be sentenced on April 5, 2021. The investigation and prosecution was a partnership

between DOI, the U.S. Department of Labor Inspector General, and the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

- **[City Employee Falsifies Work Hours, Ordered to Pay Back Funds](#)**
The former General Counsel for the City Civil Service Commission (“CSC”) pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of falsifying hours on her timesheet, which she did not work, and agreed to pay back more than \$15,000 in restitution to the City. The matter was investigated in partnership with the Office of the Manhattan District Attorney and was the result of a referral from CSC who noted the discrepancies in the defendant’s timesheets.
- **[Unlawful Visitor Searches at Manhattan Detention Complex](#)**
A DOC Captain and four DOC Correction Officers were convicted, and one Correction Officer was acquitted, after a trial on charges of performing unlawful searches of visitors at the Manhattan Detention Complex and filing false paperwork that concealed their conduct. The five convicted defendants were found guilty of Conspiracy in the Sixth Degree, and various other counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, Official Misconduct and Unlawful Imprisonment, and sentenced to a Conditional Discharge. As a result, DOC has terminated the employment of four Correction Officers, while the DOC Captain retired prior to arrest. The charges were announced in 2019, in conjunction with a DOI report about ongoing problems with visitor searches at DOC. [To read that report, click here.](#) The case was prosecuted by the Office of the Manhattan District Attorney.
- **[Convictions in Deadly Gas Explosion](#)**
Three defendants charged in the fatal East Village gas explosion, which killed 23-year old Nicholas Figueroa and 26-year old Moises Locon, and seriously injured 13 other victims, were each sentenced to 4-to-12 years in state prison. The case was prosecuted by the Office of the Manhattan District Attorney.
- **[Straw Donor Scheme](#)**
DOI, the New York State Attorney General’s Office, and the New York State Comptroller’s Office announced the sentencing of a non-profit executive for misuse of nonprofit funds to fund straw political donations to a former New York City Council candidate. The former non-profit executive was sentenced to five years’ probation for her role in the scheme, providing funds to other employees at the day care center to contribute to a City Council candidate.
- **[Cash Bribes](#)**
 - DOI worked in partnership with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) on an investigation that led to charges against six DOC Officers and 15 others charged with conspiring to accept bribes and smuggle contraband into Rikers Island facilities. Seven of the 21 defendants have pleaded guilty and the remainder of the matters are pending in federal court. [To read more, click here.](#)
 - A former DOC Officer pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to commit honest services wire fraud for his role in smuggling packages containing contraband to inmates at the Anna M. Kross Center on Rikers Island in return for thousands of dollars in cash bribes. The defendant will be sentenced on April 1, 2021. The investigation and prosecution was a partnership between DOI, FBI, and the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. [To read more, click here.](#)

DOI's OUTREACH EFFORTS (Updated on Wednesday, April 21, 2021)

In CY 2020, DOI continued its annual outreach activities by conducting corruption prevention lectures and digital learning modules for City employees about DOI’s mission and their obligation to report corruption. The agency also continued to inform the public about our investigations and other efforts through regular postings to our public website, Twitter, and Facebook sites, and, where relevant, to our YouTube channel. Specifically, the number of corruption prevention and whistleblower lectures conducted by DOI decreased 83 percent, from 482 lectures given in CY 2019 to 80 lectures in CY 2020. Similarly, the number of attendees to our online e-learning anti-corruption lectures decreased by 65%, from nearly 46,000 attendees in CY 2019 to 16,320 in CY 2020. These decreases are attributed to the

COVID-19 pandemic when the majority of in-person lectures were suspended and e-learning shifted to primarily remote access given many agencies' reliance on telework during the period, which presented various technological and other challenges to agencies.

DOI's COMPLAINTS AND INTAKES (Updated on Wednesday, April 21, 2021)

DOI receives complaints through an array of mechanisms. For instance, complainants may contact the City's 311 help line with a complaint that gets forwarded to DOI, or complainants may contact an Inspector General unit directly, or they may contact DOI's Complaint Intake Unit, our public-facing unit devoted to receiving complaints from the public. In CY2020, the Complaint Intake Unit received communications from the public through various mechanisms, including: 748 complaints processed through 311; 845 complaints rerouted from other City agencies; 124 complaints received via mail; 1,723 complaints received via DOI's online complaint system; and 1,816 calls to the Complaint Intake Unit.

Indictments and criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are 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.

**DOI's press releases can also be found at twitter.com/NYC_DOI
Bribery and Corruption are a Trap. Don't Get Caught Up. Report It at 212-3-NYC-DOI.**