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Edward F. Stancik
Special Commissioner

NEWS RELEASE

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School Administrators Mishandle Recovery of Loaded Handgun from 8-year-old Student

Today, Special Commissioner of Investigation Edward F. Stancik has scheduled a **press conference** for **11 a.m.** to release a report, *Toy Story? An Investigation Into The Recovery Of An Eight-Year-Old's Loaded .32 Caliber Revolver At PS 181*, which details an incident at a Queens public elementary school in which a third grader was discovered to be in possession of a gun after he threatened a classmate with it. The police were not immediately notified, however; instead school officials held on to the weapon and labeled it a "toy."

On Friday, April 3, 1998—just two weeks after two students in Jonesboro, Arkansas brought weapons to school and used them to kill and wound classmates and teachers—a paraprofessional at PS 181 located in District 29 in Queens, learned that an eight-year-old threatened a fellow third grader with a gun. She subsequently discovered the firearm in the child's backpack. The weapon—a .32 caliber silver revolver with a black handle—was fully loaded and operable. The paraprofessional immediately took the gun to the principal, but the police were not called until Monday morning. Instead:

- The principal, Ronald Zimmerman, slipped the gun in his pocket, located the student who brought it to school, and drove him home.
- Zimmerman proceeded to the District 29 office and placed the firearm on the desk of the superintendent, Celestine Miller.
- Calling it a "toy gun," Miller turned it over to her assistant who placed the loaded revolver in a cabinet in his unlocked office for the weekend.
- On Monday, preparing for a suspension hearing, the special assistant examined the gun more closely and the police were notified. Officers responded to the district office where the student was placed under arrest and the revolver and ammunition were finally properly safeguarded.

Commissioner Stancik recommended termination of Miller's employment. Noting that Superintendent Miller had reassigned the principal and had placed a letter of admonishment in his file, the Commissioner asked the Board to evaluate whether additional disciplinary action should be taken against Zimmerman.