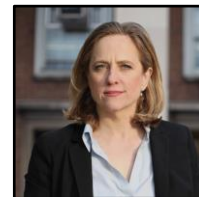




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BRONX RESIDENT CHARGED IN HIT-AND-RUN BOX TRUCK CRASH
THAT KILLED MAN AND DAMAGED NUMEROUS VEHICLES

*Defendant Allegedly Does Not Have Drivers' License and Was in Stolen Truck;
Faces Up to 25 Years to Life in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that a 37-year-old Bronx man has been charged with murder in the second degree and other crimes in connection with a deadly collision on Metropolitan Avenue at the Metro Mall exit in Middle Village, Queens Tuesday afternoon. A 25-year-old man lost his life as a result of the defendant allegedly slamming into the victim's car.

District Attorney Katz said, "This is a tragic incident that was caused by the alleged criminal actions of this defendant, who is accused of stealing a truck and causing extensive property damage to dozens of cars. This depraved driving spree only came to an end after a horrible collision that killed a young man in his 20s. The defendant is in custody and faces very serious charges."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Ramon Pena, 37, of Albany Crescent in the Bronx. Pena was arraigned last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge Mary Bejarano on a complaint charging him with murder in the second degree, manslaughter in the second degree, assault in the first degree and felony assault in the second degree, grand larceny in the third degree, leaving the scene without reporting death and various traffic violations. Judge Bejarano held the defendant without bail and set his return date for July 10, 2020. If convicted, Pena faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

District Attorney Katz said that, according to the criminal charges, on June 30, 2020, Pena allegedly stole a box truck that was parked with keys in the ignition from 101st Avenue in the Jamaica neighborhood of Queens. The truck driver was making deliveries at approximately noon when the box truck was stolen. The commercial vehicle was then observed going eastbound on 101st Avenue. A delivery truck matching the stolen vehicle's description was later seen striking in excess of 20 parked and moving cars - some of them occupied and causing injuries - along Humboldt and Metropolitan avenues in both Queens and Brooklyn.

Additionally, according to the charges, said DA Katz, the driver of one of the cars struck

by the box truck began to follow the defendant as it proceeded eastbound on Metropolitan Avenue. The box truck, allegedly travelling up to 50 miles per hour, went through multiple red lights and drove on the wrong side of the street. The defendant allegedly struck a Honda CRV on Rentar Plaza as Mr. Hamlet Cruz-Gomez exited the Metro Mall parking lot. The box truck t-boned the Honda, smashing in the driver's side of the vehicle. Mr. Cruz-Gomez, of the Bronx, was transported to Elmhurst General Hospital, where he went into cardiac arrest and died.

According to the charges, the defendant allegedly jumped out of the box truck after the crash and ran on foot away from the area and into the nearby Metropolitan Subway Station. Responding police pursued Pena into the transit station and apprehended him. The defendant allegedly does not have a valid driver's license and does not have a driving history at all within the state of New York.

The investigation was conducted by detective of the New York City Police Departments CIS – Collision Investigation Squad. Also assisting in the investigation were police officers with the NYPD's 104th and 9th precincts.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Emily Collins, of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Brad A. Leventhal, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, John W. Kosinski Chief of the Vehicular Homicide Unit and Deputy Bureau Chief, and Kenneth A. Appelbaum, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: E-version of this press release is posted on www.queensda.org