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**D.A. BROWN: NEW JERSEY MAN AND BRONX CABDRIVER CHARGED  
IN \$355,000 MORTGAGE SCHEME INVOLVING IDENTITY FRAUD**

*Arrested At Mortgage Signing; Allegedly Wanted To "Flip" Property for \$550,000 Within 2 Days*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that two alleged identity thieves – a Sayreville, New Jersey, man and a Bronx cabdriver – have been charged with attempting to obtain a \$355,000 mortgage on a New Jersey property through the use of stolen and false identities. The defendants allegedly planned to “flip” the property and sell it very quickly for a \$200,000 profit.

District Attorney Brown said, “Acting on a tip from a mortgage investigator, the two would-be borrowers were apprehended earlier this week as they sat down at the mortgage closing table in Jamaica, Queens. When questioned by police, the defendants allegedly produced various forms of personal identifiers – including a New York State driver’s license, a permanent resident (green) card and various credit cards – none of which were in their actual names.”

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Syed Rehman, 39, of 132 Winding Wood in Sayreville, New Jersey, and Ejaz Chaudhary, 41, of 2040 Bronxdale Avenue in the Bronx.

The defendants were arraigned today before Queens Criminal Court Judge Steven W. Paynter on charges of Attempted Grand Larceny in the First Degree, Identity Theft in the First and Second Degrees, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, Unlawful Possession of Personal Identification Information in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree. If convicted, they each face up to fourteen years in prison. Judge Paynter set bail on each defendant at \$100,000 and ordered a return date of March 21, 2006.

The District Attorney said that his Economics Crime Bureau received a tip from the mortgage company that a closing was going to occur on Monday, March 6, and that the named borrower was, in fact, a victim of identity theft and would not be present at the closing. The District Attorney’s Office, in turn, contacted the NYPD’s Special Fraud Squad, which quickly responded to the closing.

District Attorney Brown said, “This case demonstrates the close cooperation that exists between my office and the NYPD. The NYPD’s prompt and effective response prevented these individuals from getting away with approximately half a million dollars had their plan succeeded.”

According to the charges, said District Attorney Brown, on the afternoon of March 6, 2006, the defendants appeared for a mortgage loan closing at 148-45 Hillside Avenue. A mortgage was scheduled to be signed by the defendants for a property located at 1606 79<sup>th</sup> Street in North Bergen, New Jersey. At the closing, Chaudhary identified himself as Azeem Sirajuddin and produced a New York State driver’s license and a permanent resident card, both bearing Chaudhary’s photo and the name and address of Azeem Sirajuddin. When confronted by police, it is alleged that Chaudhary stated that he had obtained the documents on Roosevelt Avenue, that his true name was Ejaz Chaudhary and that he did not know Azeem Sirajuddin.

The District Attorney said the complaint further alleges that Rehman told police that he was there on behalf of a lawyer whom he could not name, and that when asked for identification, he allegedly produced two Macy’s credit cards – neither of which was in his name nor did he have authorization to use them. He also was found allegedly to be in possession of 30 separate items of identification – including names, addresses, dates of birth, social security numbers and other personal identifying information – which had been stolen.

District Attorney Brown noted that his office recently announced the indictment of 21 other individuals with ties to a violent street gang based on Roosevelt Avenue on charges of operating a \$1 million a year criminal enterprise that supplied fraudulent government identity documents – such as resident alien cards, driver’s licenses and Social Security cards – to individuals throughout the country. Roosevelt Avenue is considered to be the epicenter of such fraudulent activity on the East Coast. The typical street price for a Social Security card is \$40, a New York State driver’s license costs \$50 and a DHS-ICE resident alien card costs \$60.

The investigation leading to today’s arrests was conducted by NYPD Detective Donald Graves, assisted by Detective Carolyn Shabunia, and Detective Andrew Barone, Special Frauds Squad, under the supervision of Captain Gregory Antonsen, Squad Commander, and the overall supervision of Chief of Detectives George F. Brown.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Neil F. Gitin, of the District Attorney’s Economic Crimes Bureau under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Diane M. Peress, Deputy Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

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

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**Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org).**