



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000**

Release # 205-2006
www.queensda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2006

**CONTACT: KEVIN RYAN
NICOLE NAVAS
MERIS CAMPBELL
(718)286-6315**

**D.A. BROWN: ASTORIA MAN CHARGED WITH POSING AS POLICE OFFICER
AND DETAINING INNOCENT 15-YEAR-OLD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT**

Allegedly Aired Incident on Website

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a 21-year-old Astoria man has been charged with criminal impersonation, among other charges, for posing as a plainclothes New York City police officer and unlawfully stopping and questioning an innocent pedestrian about a purported robbery. Unknown to the pedestrian – a 15-year-old high school student – the incident was being recorded and later appeared on a website entitled “YouTube.”

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendant is accused of posing as a police officer and stopping a law-abiding pedestrian late at night. His alleged actions not only damage the reputation of our police officers – who already perform a difficult job – but potentially could have resulted in injury to the victim or even himself.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Gazi Abura, 21, of 23-55 White Oak Court in Astoria. The defendant is being held pending arraignment in Queens Criminal Court on charges of second-degree criminal impersonation, second-degree coercion and second-degree unlawful imprisonment. If convicted, the defendant faces up to a year in jail.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges, the 15-year-old male victim was walking home one night last July when a burgundy car pulled alongside him at the intersection of 85th Street and 25th Avenue and three men – including the defendant – exited the vehicle. The men allegedly identified themselves as police officers and directed the victim to stop, raise his hands over his head and provide identification. Believing that the three men were police officers in plain clothes, he complied with all their instructions. The men then informed the victim that there had been a robbery in the area and that he matched the description of the suspect. The men then allegedly demanded to see identification and to know where the victim was going when they stopped him. The victim explained that he was going home and produced his high school identification card.

The District Attorney said that the criminal charges further allege that several weeks later the victim heard that the incident was appearing on a website entitled “YouTube.” The victim was unaware that the incident had been recorded or that his photo identification card had been recorded for the benefit of the website’s viewers.

District Attorney Brown noted that the investigation was continuing.

The investigation leading to today’s arrest was conducted by Detective Gregory McCann of the New York City Police Department’s Internal Affairs Bureau Group 51 under the supervision of Lieutenant John Zerillo, Commanding Officer.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Daniel J. O’Leary, of the District Attorney’s Integrity Bureau under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Carmencita N. Gutierrez, Deputy Bureau Chief, and James M. Liander, Bureau 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 criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.