



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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

Release # 23-2008
www.queensda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2008

CONTACT: KEVIN RYAN
HELEN PETERSON
(718) 286-6315

**MANHATTAN MAN CHARGED WITH STEALING \$360,000 BY SURREPTITIOUSLY
TAKING OUT MORTGAGE ON MOTHER-IN-LAW'S QUEENS CONDO**

Faces Up To 15 Years In Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that an international businessman who resides in Manhattan has been charged with using a forged power of attorney to unlawfully obtain a \$360,000 mortgage on his mother-in-law's condominium in the Little Neck section of Queens.

District Attorney Brown said, "Mortgage fraud and identity theft are quickly emerging as among the fastest-growing white-collar crimes in the country today. In this particular case, the defendant is accused of perpetrating an elaborate scheme to drain the equity from his mother-law's Queens condo – allegedly going so far as duping her to believing he knew someone in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office who could help her when she became aware of the mortgage swindle."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Shih Siang Shawn Liao, 31, of 300 West 110th Street in Manhattan. Liao, who is the founder and president of Hydra Buildings with offices in Manhattan and extensive business dealings in London and Hong Kong, was arraigned last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge Gene Lopez on charges of second-degree grand larceny, second-degree criminal possession of stolen property, second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, first-degree identity theft, first-degree falsifying business records and third-degree unlawful possession of personal identification information. Liao, who faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted, was ordered held on \$100,000 bail, to surrender his passport and to return to court on February 14, 2008.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, 54-year-old Fanny Wai Kwan Lam, of 6325 Douglaston Parkway, received in the mail in December 2006 a mortgage loan statement from Chase Home Finance indicating that she had taken out a mortgage for \$360,000 on her residence and that the monthly payment was due. Ms. Lam, who owns her condominium free and clear of any mortgages, did not apply for a mortgage loan nor did she authorize anyone to apply for such a mortgage on her behalf.

At some point, it is alleged that when Ms. Lam informed her son-in-law, the defendant Liao, that someone had taken an unauthorized mortgage out on her property, he told her that he knew someone at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office who might be able to help her and gave her the person's e-mail address so that she could contact that person. The e-mail address, which contained the letters DA to make it look official, is alleged to belong to the defendant.

(MORE)

The District Attorney said it is further charged that at a closing held on November 28, 2006, with bank attorneys, the defendant Liao presented a forged power of attorney – dated October 16, 2006, and purportedly executed by Ms. Lam – and signed a mortgage note and other contractual documents allegedly on his mother-in-law’s behalf so that she could refinance her property for \$360,000. Liao then presented the bank attorney with a Washington Mutual account number (in Ms. Lam’s name) to which to wire the proceeds – \$347,000 after closing costs. The funds were deposited into the account two days later and, it is alleged, from that day through December 14, 2006, the entire deposit was withdrawn via transfers to Hydra Buildings and payments to several credit card companies – such as American Express, Discover, Citibank, Capital One and Chase Bank – for accounts held by Liao or his company, Hydra Buildings.

An investigation by the District Attorney’s Economic Crimes Bureau determined that the address on Ms. Lam’s Washington Mutual account allegedly had been changed from her Queens residence to a post office box address belonging to Hydra Buildings.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Oniel Miller of the NYPD’s Queens District Attorney’s Squad under the supervision of Sergeant Frank Horvath and the overall supervision of Captain John M. Zanfardino.

Assistant District Attorney Allison P. Wright, of the District Attorney’s Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Gregory Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney Peter Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda Cantoni of the Investigations Division.

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 on www.queensda.org