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**QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY MOVES TO
DISMISS CHARGES IN 1996 DOUBLE MURDER CASE**

Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that her office will move to dismiss charges against George Bell, Gary Johnson, and Rohan Bolt, who were convicted of the December 21, 1996, murders of Ira “Mike” Epstein and NYPD Police Officer Charles Davis during a robbery attempt of Mr. Epstein’s check cashing business.

DA Katz said, “Three months ago, as the result of review by my office’s Conviction Integrity Unit, we filed a motion with defense counsel to vacate the convictions of these three men. At that time, I launched an investigation to determine whether to re-try the case or move to dismiss the charges. That investigation has concluded and we are moving to dismiss the indictments against the defendants. In addition, we are moving to amend the grounds on which the convictions were overturned to include ‘newly discovered evidence which, if available at the time of trial, would more likely than not have led to a verdict more favorable to the defendants.’ A fair and accurate trial depends on all parties knowing all of the evidence so that the jury can make an informed decision about the guilt or innocence of a defendant.”

DA Katz said her office will ask the court to dismiss the charges at a hearing scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Friday, June 4 before Justice Michelle Johnson, acting Administrative Judge of the Queens Supreme Court. <http://wowza.nycourts.gov/VirtualCourt/st-qnsupcr.php?room=st-qnsupcr1> Password: 4893

Under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney Pishoy Yacoub – who has been in charge of the Queens DA’s Supreme Court Trial Division and Legal Training since his appointment in January 2020 – the three-month investigation included review of all relevant documentary evidence, interviews with more than 60 witnesses, review of hundreds of hours of electronic evidence, forensic testing of DNA evidence and ballistics evidence and the forensic re-testing of fingerprint evidence.

DA Katz said, “The job of the District Attorney is to ensure that justice is dispensed fairly, and the Conviction Integrity Unit exists to safeguard the process. Nearly 25 years ago, two families lost their loved ones to senseless violence and in the aftermath, three men were improperly convicted of their murders. The case now goes to our Cold Case Unit.”

Under DA Katz, the Queens District Attorney’s office has taken crucial steps to make certain justice is served in every case, including:

- Designing a computer program that ensures coordination and communication between prosecutors about potentially related cases;

- Creating and implementing enhanced prosecutor training programs to improve case assessment and management;
- Creating and implementing policies and procedures to assist prosecutors in complying with new discovery reform laws that went into effect in January of 2020.

DA Katz said, “There can be no true justice, in Queens County or anywhere, unless we hold ourselves to the highest standards facilitating the process by which justice is sought. Our commitment to this effort continues.”

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

