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TWO DRIVERS CHARGED IN SEPARATE DEADLY CRASHES

*Passenger in Stolen Vehicle Killed in East Elmhurst;
Motorist Dies Hours After Being Struck by Car After Stepping Out of His Vehicle
Following Earlier Collision on Belt Parkway*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that Christian Carrion-Rivera, 26, has been charged with possessing stolen property and fleeing the scene of an incident without reporting a death for a 9 a.m. car crash on Tuesday.

The DA also announced that Jason Bical, 34, has been charged with vehicular assault, drunk driving and other crimes for allegedly striking a driver who had just stepped out of his vehicle following a fender-bender moments earlier on the Belt Parkway just after 1 a.m. on Wednesday.

District Attorney Katz said, “When the coronavirus prompted the City to lockdown our schools and businesses, the highways and streets became vast open spaces without daily commuters. When traffic returned too many continued to ignore the rules of the road. As we near the end of the year, we have seen a 21 percent increase in vehicular deaths compared to 2019. This is unacceptable. Driving at excessive speed or driving while drunk or high creates heartache and unnecessary grief. The two defendants now face serious charges.”

Carrion-Rivera, of Horace Harding Expressway in Corona, Queens, was arraigned before Queens Criminal Court Judge Toko Serita Wednesday night on a complaint charging him with criminal possession of stolen property in the third and fifth degree, leaving scene of an incident without reporting death, criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree and aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the third degree. Judge Serita ordered the defendant to return to Court on February 18, 2021. If convicted, Carrion-Rivera faces up to seven years in prison.

According to the charges, on December 8, 2020, at approximately 9 a.m., the defendant was behind the wheel of a black Acura sedan. Allegedly exceeding the speed limit going westbound on Ditmars Boulevard, Carrion-Rivera slammed into two trees on the north side of the street and ricocheted off them and went into the westbound lanes of the street and then came to a final stop on the center median strip.

DA Katz said, the defendant allegedly exited the driver’s seat and ran from the scene as police arrived, but he was apprehended after a short foot chase. First responders found Felix Lopez, 24, in the passenger seat of the Acura unconscious and unresponsive. The victim, who lived in Jamaica, Queens, was rushed to a hospital where he died a short time later.

According to the complaint, the Acura was allegedly stolen. Police recovered a backpack from inside the vehicle that contained heroin. When questioned, Carrion-Rivera was unable to show police a valid driver's license.

Defendant Bical, of East 73rd Street in Brooklyn, was arraigned yesterday morning before Queens Criminal Court Judge Scott Dunn on a complaint charging him with vehicular assault in the first degree, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and operating motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. Judge Dunn set the defendants return date for February 11, 2021. If convicted, Bical faces up to seven years in prison.

According to the charges, just after 1 a.m. on December 9, 2020, the drivers of a black Nissan Pathfinder and a black Chevrolet Trailblazer were involved in a minor car crash on the Belt Parkway near exit 20. Both drivers stopped their vehicles on the Parkway and exited to exchange information. Seconds later, the defendant in a Chevrolet Malibu allegedly driving at a high speed slammed into the victim, Taher Ali Hassan. The 63-year-old from Brooklyn was rushed to an area hospital with severe head trauma. Mr. Hassan died of the injuries he sustained yesterday afternoon.

The DA added that Bical was arrested and a breathalyzer test showed he allegedly had .17 blood alcohol content in his bloodstream at the time of the crash.

The investigation of the Carrion-Rivera case was conducted by Police Officer Olujimi Ogundiran of the New York City Police Department's 115th Precinct.

The investigation of the Bical case was conducted by Police Officer Michael Genovese of the New York City Police Department's Highway 3 Unit.

Assistant District Attorney Xhulia Derhemi, of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau, is prosecuting the cases under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Brad Leventhal, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney Daniel Saunders.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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