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**BRONX MAN INDICTED ON MURDER CHARGES FOR HIT-AND-RUN BOX TRUCK CRASH
THAT KILLED NEW FATHER IN MIDDLE VILLAGE THIS SUMMER**

*Defendant Allegedly Left Trail of Destruction Slamming into Vehicles in Both Queens and Brooklyn
Before Fatal Collision on Metropolitan Avenue;
Accused Faces Up to 25 Years to Life in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Ramon Pena, 37, was indicted by a Queens County grand jury on murder charges and other crimes for allegedly causing a deadly collision on Metropolitan Avenue at the Metro Mall exit in Middle Village, Queens on July 30, 2020.

District Attorney Katz said, "The defendant in this case is accused of stealing a box truck then speeding off and randomly crashing into more than 20 cars. In his wake, the defendant allegedly left a trail of destruction that culminated in a deadly collision. A young man – who became the father of a baby girl just a week earlier – was tragically killed. This kind of senseless mayhem is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in Queens County."

Pena, of Albany Crescent in the Bronx, is charged in an 32-count indictment with murder in the second degree, felony assault in the first, second and third degree, grand larceny in the third and fourth degree, leaving the scene of an accident without reporting death, criminal mischief in the fourth degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree and operating a vehicle without a valid driver's license. The defendant was arraigned this afternoon before Queens Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Holder, who remanded Pena and set the return date for November 2, 2020. If convicted, Pena faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

District Attorney Katz said that on June 30, 2020, Pena allegedly stole a box truck that was parked with keys in the ignition from 101st Avenue in the Jamaica neighborhood of Queens while the driver was making midday deliveries. The same delivery truck was later seen striking in excess of 20 parked and moving cars - some of them occupied - along Humboldt and Metropolitan Avenues in both Queens and Brooklyn. A few other drivers suffered non-life-threatening injuries.

Continuing, the DA said, two drivers in cars struck by the box truck began to pursue the defendant as he continued going eastbound on Metropolitan Avenue. An eyewitness reported seeing the box truck traveling upwards of 50 miles per hour, running red lights, driving on the sidewalk at times and driving on the wrong side of the street.

According to the charges, at the intersection of Rentar Plaza and Metropolitan Avenue in Queens, the defendant ran through a red light and allegedly slammed into a Honda CR-V on Rentar Plaza as the driver, Hamlet Cruz-Gomez, exited the Metro Mall parking area. The 25-year-old victim's car was t-boned and the entire driver's side was smashed. Mr. Cruz-Gomez, of the Bronx, was transported to the hospital and died a short time later.

The DA said the defendant allegedly jumped out of the box truck following the collision and ran on foot into the nearby Metropolitan Subway Station, where police apprehended him.

The investigation was conducted by detectives of the New York City Police Department's Collision Investigation Squad. Also assisting in the investigation were police officers with the NYPD's 104th and 90th precincts.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Emily Collins, of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Brad A. Leventhal, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, John W. Kosinski Chief of the Vehicular Homicide Unit and Deputy Bureau Chief, and Kenneth A. Appelbaum, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

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

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