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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**MAIL FISHING-CHECK STEALING CREW DISMANTLED IN QUEENS;**  
**GRAND JURY INDICTS SIX INDIVIDUALS ON GRAND LARCENY, CONSPIRACY**  
**AND OTHER CHARGES**

*Defendants Allegedly Stole Checks from Mail, Inflated their Value  
Then Deposited Them into Bank Accounts;  
More Than \$100,000 Stolen in Mail Fishing Scheme*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the New York City Police Department, announced today that six individuals have been charged in two separate indictments by a Queens County grand jury and arraigned in Supreme Court on enterprise corruption, grand larceny charges and other crimes. Between March and June of 2019, the defendants allegedly worked in concert to steal checks from mailboxes, alter them with higher dollar values and deposit the checks for cash or other transactions from crewmembers' accounts. The defendants allegedly utilized electronic transfer services to access money from several victims.

District Attorney Katz said, "This scheme caused havoc and unwarranted financial hardship for the victims. As alleged, these defendants worked together to line their pockets with money laundered through banks after they deposited checks stolen from numerous USPS mailboxes. They would erase the original payout on the checks and write in their own figures. My Office, working in conjunction with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the New York City Police Department, has broken up this crew of alleged thieves. We will continue to collaborate with our law enforcement partners to protect the residents of Queens from these types of schemes."

NYPD Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell said, "Mailbox fishing is a very serious crime – where victims are often unaware that a theft has been committed until months later. Today's charges serve as an example to those who believe they can get away with victimizing hardworking members of our communities by stealing from the U.S. Postal Service. In conjunction with our law-enforcement partners, the NYPD will identify you, will arrest you, and will deliver justice."

United States Postal Inspector in Charge Daniel B. Brubaker said, "Postal Inspectors have zero tolerance for those who victimize consumers using the U.S. Mail. This is why Postal Inspectors, along with our law enforcement partners, are relentless in investigating these cases to ensure alleged criminals like these, are brought to justice for the crime of mail theft."

The defendants were arraigned both Wednesday and yesterday in Queens Supreme Court. Four defendants are charged in the first indictment and two more are charged in a second separate indictment. The defendants are variously charged with grand larceny, conspiracy and other crimes. **(See Addendum for details on all defendants).**

According to the charges, between March 1, 2019 and June 10, 2019, the defendants were all part of a criminal conspiracy specializing in mail theft and check fraud, which netted approximately \$100,000 in stolen funds from residents and businesses in Queens County and elsewhere. Each defendant had their own role in this organized scheme, which started with defendant Luis Velazquez allegedly stealing mail from various Queens locations to find both personal and business checks.

DA Katz continued that the stolen checks were then provided to the crew's boss, who would coordinate with other defendants to alter the checks or change the checks completely by erasing the handwritten ink using brake fluid or acetone and then putting the names of an accomplice, who was willing to open bank accounts for the organization. The defendants changed the original amount of the checks to a much higher figure and then these doctored checks were deposited into the accomplices' bank accounts. From that point, cash would be withdrawn against these fraudulent checks.

Between April 16, 2019 and June 4, 2019, according to the charges, another group of defendants allegedly conducted five electronic money transfers moving the cash from deposits into two co-defendants' accounts - in essence laundering the stolen money.

The investigation was conducted by the NYPD Financial Crimes Task Force, the NYPD Grand Larceny Division, the NYPD Intelligence Bureau, NYPD Warrants Squad, the NYPD Fugitive Enforcement Division, and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant District Attorney Catherine Jahn, of the District Attorney's Major Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine Kane and Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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## **ADDENDUM**

First Indictment Defendants:

**LUIS VELAZQUEZ**, 26, of University Avenue in the Bronx, is accused of being a mail fisher. The defendant was arraigned Wednesday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant on an indictment charging him with enterprise corruption, grand larceny in the third degree, criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. The defendant was ordered to return to Court on May 26, 2022. If convicted, Velazquez faces a minimum of 1 ½ to 3 years and up to 8 1/3 to 25 years in prison.

**STEVEN DEFAS**, 23, of Arnow Avenue in the Bronx, is accused of being a collusive bank account manager. The defendant was arraigned yesterday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant on an indictment charging him with enterprise corruption, grand larceny in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth

degree. The defendant was ordered to return to Court on May 26, 2022. If convicted, Defas faces a minimum of 1 ½ to 3 years and up to 8 1/3 to 25 years in prison.

**RAQUAWN GARCIA**, 26, of Rogers Place in the Bronx, is accused of being a runner for the crew. The defendant was arraigned Wednesday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant on an indictment charging him with enterprise corruption, grand larceny in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. The defendant was ordered to return to Court on May 26, 2022. If convicted, Garcia faces a minimum of 4 ½ to 9 1/3 up to 12 ½ to 25 years in prison.

**ANTHONY FLEETWOOD**, 37, of Saint Anns Avenue in the Bronx, is accused of being a collusive bank account holder. The defendant was arraigned yesterday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant on an indictment charging him with enterprise corruption, grand larceny in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. The defendant's next Court date is May 26, 2022. If convicted, Fleetwood faces a minimum of 1 ½ to 3 years and up to 8 1/3 to 25 years in prison.

Second Indictment Defendants:

**HANA ALRABADI**, 22, of Jamaica, Queens, is accused of being a collusive bank account holder. The defendant was arraigned Wednesday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. The defendant's return date is May 26, 2022. If convicted, Alrabadi faces up to 2 ½ to 7 years in prison.

**ROLANDO CRUZ**, 22, of Grand Street in Manhattan, is accused of being a collusive bank account holder. The defendant was arraigned Wednesday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant on an indictment charging him with grand larceny in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. The defendant's next Court date is May 26, 2022. If convicted, Cruz faces up to 2 ½ to 7 years in prison.

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

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