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TENANT CHARGED FOR SHOOTING BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT,
FIRING AT RESPONDING POLICE OFFICERS
Arrested Following Standoff with NYPD

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that William Hernandez was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with attempted murder, kidnapping and assault for allegedly getting into a shootout with police officers after holding his building superintendent at gunpoint and then shooting him.

District Attorney Katz said: “The defendant is charged with attempted murder in the first degree for allegedly trying to kill a police officer in addition to attempted murder in the second degree in the shooting of his building superintendent. This is not the Wild West. This extremely dangerous and highly volatile situation was safely defused thanks to the bravery and skill of the responding NYPD officers. Carnage was averted and the defendant will now have to answer to the charges we have filed against him.”

Hernandez, 65, of 54th Street in Woodside, was arraigned on an 11-count indictment charging him with attempted murder in the first and second degrees, kidnapping in the second degree, assault in the first and second degrees, two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree, and three counts of reckless endangerment in the first degree. He faces up to 40 years in prison if convicted. Supreme Court Justice Leigh K. Cheng ordered Hernandez to return to court on January 17, 2024.

According to the charges:

- On November 22, at approximately 10:00 a.m., Hernandez confronted the superintendent on the second floor of the building where he lived. The superintendent, Cruz Catana Velasquez, 48, had gone to see a tenant. Hernandez pointed a 9 mm handgun at him, directed him into an elevator and held the elevator.
- Hernandez prevented Velasquez from leaving the elevator for approximately 54 minutes, continually threatening to shoot him.
- When Hernandez’ attention was distracted by passersby in the hallway, Velasquez ran from the elevator to the nearby staircase. Hernandez fired numerous shots at him, striking the victim in the shoulder, side and abdomen.
- Velasquez ran down the staircase to the lobby and out of the building. Two people saw the wounded superintendent and called 911.

- Responding officers from the 114th Precinct arrived on the scene and saw a Hispanic man reach out of a sixth-floor apartment window and fire a shot directly across the street.
- A team of officers went up to the sixth floor and observed Hernandez hiding behind a wall with a gun in his hand.
- After Hernandez ignored repeated commands to drop the gun, an officer fired at him. Hernandez fired back at the officer and the same officer returned fire. No one was hit.
- When Hernandez barricaded himself inside his sixth-floor apartment, the New York City Police Department Emergency Services Unit responded to the scene. Hernandez refused to come out. The standoff lasted for about two and a half hours.
- ESU officers entered the apartment after hearing a gunshot and found Hernandez in the bathroom with a gunshot wound to his chest.
- Hernandez was apprehended at approximately 1:45 p.m. and taken to a nearby hospital.
- The superintendent underwent surgery for his gunshot wounds.
- Following Hernandez' apprehension, a search warrant was obtained for his apartment. A loaded 9 mm firearm was recovered from the hallway inside by members of the NYPD.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas E. Salmon of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Michael Whitney, Bureau Chief, and Roni C. Piplani, Deputy Bureau Chief, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

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

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