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BERNARDO RAUL CASTRO MATA ARRAIGNED ON INDICTMENT CHARGES OF FIRST-DEGREE ATTEMPTED MURDER FOR SHOOTING TWO POLICE OFFICERS

Defendant Allegedly Drove Unregistered Motorcycle Wrong Way on One-Way Street in East Elmhurst When Cops Attempted to Stop Him, Shot Two Officers While Resisting Arrest

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Bernardo Raul Castro Mata was arraigned today on grand jury indictment charges of two counts of attempted murder in the first and second degrees, and other related crimes, for allegedly shooting two NYPD officers who attempted to pull him over on June 3 for driving the wrong way on a one-way street without a helmet on an unregistered motorcycle in East Elmhurst.

During the confrontation, Mata dismounted the motorcycle and fled the scene. After the officers caught up to Mata and tried to place him under arrest Mata allegedly fired at both men, shooting Officer Christopher Abreu in the leg and Officer Richard Yarusso in the front of his bullet-resistant vest.

District Attorney Katz said: "An attempt on the lives of two police officers simply making a traffic stop should offend every New Yorker. The grand jury returned serious charges against the defendant including two counts of attempted murder in the first degree. The defendant is accused of shooting two New York City police officers at point-blank range after they attempted to stop him from driving the wrong way down a one-way street in East Elmhurst."

Mata, 19, undomiciled, was charged in a 20-count indictment with two counts of attempted murder in the first degree; two counts of attempted murder in the second degree; two counts of attempted assault in the first degree; two counts of attempted aggravated assault upon a police officer; two counts of criminal possession of a weapon in the second degree; four counts of assault in the second degree; resisting arrest; obstructing governmental administration in the second degree; reckless driving; driving a vehicle the wrong way on a one way roadway; operating or riding upon a motorcycle without a helmet; and operating or driving a motorcycle without proper license plates.

If convicted of the top count, Mata faces a potential maximum sentence of up to 40 years to life in prison for each charge of attempted murder in the first degree.

Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Holder ordered him to return to court September 16.

According to the charges:

- On Monday, June 3 at approximately 1:40 a.m., NYPD police officers Christopher Abreu and Richard Yarusso and NYPD Sergeant Nicholas Condos were on patrol in an unmarked police vehicle while wearing NYPD uniforms.
- The officers and sergeant observed Mata operating an unregistered motorcycle and driving the wrong way down Ditmars Boulevard near 90th Street in East Elmhurst. Mata was not wearing a helmet while operating the motorcycle.
- Mata was also observed weaving the motorcycle onto the sidewalk with pedestrians present.
- Officer Yarusso and his sergeant exited the unmarked police vehicle and tried to approach Mata, at which point the defendant ditched the motorcycle and fled the scene on foot.
- Officer Yarusso began a foot pursuit while Officer Abreu followed the defendant in the unmarked vehicle. Sergeant Condos pursued the defendant using the motorcycle that the defendant had been operating.

- After catching up to the defendant in the vicinity of 23rd Avenue and 89th Street, Officer Abreu attempted to place Mata under arrest, but the defendant began resisting arrest by twisting his body, flailing his arms and reaching inside a bag he was wearing across his chest.
- Officer Yarusso attempted to help Officer Abreu place the defendant in handcuffs and the two officers struggled with the defendant on the ground.
- During the struggle, Mata removed a firearm from his crossbody bag and shot Officer Yarusso in the lower chest at point-blank range. The officer's bullet-resistant vest stopped the bullet. Mata also shot Officer Abreu, striking him in the upper right thigh area.
- Officer Abreu returned fire, shooting Mata in the foot and ankle area, at which point the defendant let go of the firearm and was placed in handcuffs.
- Both officers were treated for their injuries and released from a local hospital.

Police recovered a loaded Hi-Point .380-caliber pistol at the scene as well as two deformed fired bullets, nine bullet fragments, three discharged .380-caliber shell casings, and four 9 mm discharged shell casings.

Assistant District Attorney Lauren D. Reilly of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Michael Whitney, Bureau Chief, Roni Piplani, Deputy Bureau Chief, and 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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