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QUEENS MAN CHARGED WITH STEALING TORAH FROM FAR ROCKAWAY SCHOOL

*Water-damaged Torah was Found Inside Safe in Wooded Area of Kew Gardens Hills Three Months After Theft
Defendants Faces up to 15 years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Saul Colon was arraigned today on charges of grand larceny and burglary for stealing a safe containing a Torah scroll from a Far Rockaway yeshiva in May.

District Attorney Katz said: “This defendant and an accomplice allegedly broke into a religious school and showed profound disrespect for the Jewish community by stealing a sacred Torah scroll. For the yeshiva, this Torah was priceless and could never be replaced. My office and the NYPD never gave up on this case and, several months later, we arrested one of the suspects and were able to recover the Torah. This is an ongoing investigation, and we ask anyone with any information about the second suspect to call Crime Stoppers at 800-577-TIPS.”

Colon, 37, of Parsons Boulevard in Flushing, was arraigned before Queens Supreme Court Justice Karen Gopee on grand jury charges of grand larceny in the second degree, burglary in the third degree and grand larceny in the fourth degree.

If convicted, Colon faces a potential maximum of 7½ years to 15 years in prison. Justice Gopee ordered the defendant to return to court on September 19.

According to the charges:

- On May 7, at approximately 2:30 a.m., video surveillance footage shows defendant Colon and another unapprehended man emerging from a Ford Taurus at Siach Yitzchok, a religious school located at 1045 Beach 9th Street in Far Rockaway.
- The defendant and the other individual used a hand truck to remove a locked safe from the school office and loaded it into the car, and then left the area.
- A school administrator discovered that the safe, which contained the Torah, was missing several hours later and called the police.

- After an extensive investigation, the NYPD arrested the individual in August and located the safe in a wooded area near the Van Wyck Expressway in Kew Gardens Hills. The water-damaged Torah scroll was found inside the safe and returned to the family that had originally donated the Torah to the school.

The investigation was conducted by Detective James Essig, Jr. of the NYPD's Queens Major Case Squad Division.

Assistant District Attorney Danielle Catinella, of the District Attorney's Felony Trial Bureau IV, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Karen H. Rankin, Bureau Chief, Timothy J. Regan and Robert Ferino, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Supreme Court Trials Pishoy B. Yacoub.

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