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UNIONDALE MAN CHARGED WITH MURDER FOR INTENTIONALLY DRIVING INTO TEEN ON ROOSEVELT AVENUE

Defendant Edwin Cruz Gomez Allegedly Attempted to Solicit Teen and Her Mother; After Confrontation with Victim's Stepfather, Defendant Drove SUV Onto Sidewalk and Aimed at Group of People; Defendant Struck and Killed Girl and then Fled Scene; Faces in Excess of 25 Years to Life in Prison, if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Edwin Cruz Gomez was arraigned on charges of murder, attempted murder, assault, vehicular manslaughter and other crimes for intentionally driving his vehicle at four people, including a teenager and her mother whom he sexually propositioned just minutes earlier. The collision, which occurred on Roosevelt Avenue in Elmhurst early Saturday morning, killed the 16-year-old girl and injured her mother and stepfather.

DA Katz said: "As alleged, this defendant subjected 16-year-old Jhoanny Alvarez and her mother to crude sexual solicitations and harassment. After the child's stepfather and boyfriend confronted Edwin Cruz Gomez and then crossed to the other side of the street, the intoxicated defendant drove his SUV onto the sidewalk and took aim at the group of four. The defendant pinned the teen against a pole with his vehicle and injured her mother and stepfather as he barreled his 3-ton vehicle into them. This defendant is now charged with murder and related crimes and we will seek justice for Alvarez and her family."

Cruz Gomez, 38, of Nostrand Avenue in Uniondale, was arraigned tonight on a felony complaint charging him with murder in the second degree, three counts of attempted murder in the second degree, two counts of assault in the second degree, vehicular manslaughter in the second degree, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and related charges before Queens Criminal Court Judge Lana Schlesinger. If convicted, the defendant faces in excess of 25 years to life in prison. The defendant was ordered to return to court on September 19.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges and investigation, on September 13, at approximately 4:10 a.m., the defendant Edwin Cruz Gomez was with several other men outside the Prima Donna Restaurant, on Roosevelt Avenue between Elmhurst Avenue and Benham Street. The group of men, including the defendant, encountered the victim with her mother, stepfather and boyfriend. The defendant began harassing the victim and her mother, offering them both money for sexual acts. A verbal dispute ensued and then escalated into a physical altercation between the victim's stepfather and the defendant. Bystanders intervened and separated the men.

Following the confrontation, all parties separated. The victim, her mother, stepfather and boyfriend walked away from the restaurant to the opposite side of Roosevelt Avenue, crossing Benham Street and stood a distance away. Defendant Gomez entered his vehicle, a Chevrolet Suburban, which was double-parked on Roosevelt Avenue. He then made a right turn onto Benham Street and drove onto the sidewalk directly in line with the foursome.

After driving onto the sidewalk, Gomez allegedly struck 16-year-old Alvarez, her mother and stepfather. Gomez then proceeded in reverse on Benham Street against the posted direction until he struck an unoccupied van. At that point, Gomez abandoned his SUV and fled the scene on foot.

Emergency responders determined Alvarez was deceased due to her injuries. Her mother was transported to a local hospital for treatment of injuries to her leg sustained during the collision.

The defendant approached uniformed NYPD officers a few blocks away and reported that he was assaulted. He led officers back to the collision location.

His blood alcohol content measured .137 percent, which was above the legal threshold of .08 percent.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Timothy Ziegler of the NYPD's 110th Detective Squad.

Assistant District Attorney Abigail Neuviller of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Patricia Coladonato, Supervisor, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Jonathan Selkove, Unit Chief of the District Attorney's Vehicular Homicide Unit and Deputy Bureau Chief of the Homicide Bureau, and John Kosinski, Bureau Chief of the Homicide Bureau, 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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