

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

DEFENDANT INDICTED ON MURDER CHARGE
FOR 1998 COLD CASE STRANGULATION OF UNIDENTIFIED VICTIM

*Female Victim Found Inside Turf Motel in Astoria in January 1998
Defendant Faces up to 25 years to life in Prison, if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Jose Velasquez was indicted by a grand jury and arraigned today on a charge of second-degree murder in the 1998 strangulation homicide of an unidentified female victim. The victim was found inside an Astoria motel on January 12, 1998, with a scarf tightly wrapped around her neck. No identification was found with the victim and she has yet to be identified.

District Attorney Katz said: "For almost three decades, this female victim remained unidentified and without justice, but she was never forgotten. The Cold Case Unit I created when I first took office exists for this very reason: to ensure that justice is not denied by time or anonymity. The defendant is accused of strangling the victim 28 years ago inside the Turf motel in Astoria. Every victim matters, and we are committed to holding offenders accountable, no matter how long it takes. I thank members of my Cold Case Unit and our partners at the NYPD Cold Case Squad for their work on this case."

Velasquez, 59, formerly of Astoria, was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with murder in the second degree. Supreme Court Justice Ushir Pandit-Durant remanded the defendant and ordered him to return to court March 6.

Velasquez faces up to 25 years to life in prison, if convicted.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges in the indictment and the investigation, the unidentified female victim was between approximately 25 and 35 years old at the time of her death. On January 12, 1998, she was found deceased inside Room 119 of the Turf motel located at 31-62 14th Street in Astoria. Her body was discovered under a mattress and inside the mattress box of the bed. She had a scarf tightly wrapped around her neck. No forms of identification were found on the woman's body.

The New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in 1998 determined that the cause of death was ligature strangulation. At the time of the autopsy, evidence was collected and retained including the victim's underwear and scrapings and clippings of her fingernails.

At the request of the DA Katz' Cold Case Unit, the medical examiner's office retested the DNA in

May 2023. The OCME developed a profile of a potential suspect and linked the DNA under the victim's fingernails and on her underwear to Velasquez.

In January 2025, the defendant was interviewed by members of the NYPD Cold Case Squad and denied having ever been to the Turf motel. He was indicted by a grand jury on January 13, 2026.

The District Attorney's Office has routinely sought assistance identifying the victim in this matter via regular social media outreach requesting any information that could help advance the case.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Francis Noonan of the NYPD's Cold Case Squad.

Assistant District Attorney Eric Weinstein of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau is prosecuting this case with assistance from Assistant District Attorneys Alison Miller and Angelica Judge, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Karen L. Ross, Chief of the Cold Case Unit and Deputy Bureau Chief, and John Kosinski, 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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