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TWO CONSPIRATORS SENTENCED FOR STAGING CAR CRASHES ON NEW YORK CITY HIGHWAYS

Ringleader Jaime Huiracocha Sentenced to One to Three Years in Prison and Driver Victor Murillo Sentence to Two Years in Prison; Defendants Orchestrated Scheme to Stage Three Collisions; Dashboard Camera Video of October 2024 Crash Went Viral on Social Media

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz and New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced today that Jaime Huiracocha and Victor Murillo have been sentenced for their roles in staging three car crashes on New York City highways and seeking insurance payouts for damages and purported injuries. Huiracocha orchestrated the collisions by recruiting participants with promises of cash payouts while Murillo drove the vehicles involved in the crashes.

DA Katz said: “Staged auto collisions not only terrify the drivers who are targeted, they put other motorists at risk and ultimately lead to increased insurance costs for all New Yorkers. Thanks to a brave victim who came forward with dashcam video, and an investigation by my Financial Frauds Bureau with our partners at the NYPD and New York State Department of Financial Services, we secured convictions against two defendants who orchestrated three crashes. I thank Governor Kathy Hochul for being a nationwide leader on the issue of insurance fraud and enacting a series of reforms that will help prosecutors bring more cases and save New Yorkers money.”

New York State Governor Kathy Hochul said: “Today we’re sending a message to would-be-fraudsters everywhere: If you stage crashes, try to defraud or endanger New Yorkers, you will be held accountable. This kind of reckless, illegal behavior has been driving up auto insurance costs for millions of New Yorkers for far too long. By cracking down, we’re not just getting dangerous criminals off our roads, we’re putting money back into the pockets of everyday drivers.”

New York State Department of Financial Services Acting Superintendent Kaitlin Asrow said: “Insurance fraud leads to higher costs for all drivers and is a strain on New York’s insurance system. Fraud enforcement is part of DFS’s continued work to enact Governor Hochul’s comprehensive plan to lower insurance costs for New Yorkers. I thank the Governor, Queens District Attorney, and the New York Police Department for their partnership.”

NYPD Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch said: “Staging auto collisions on our roadways puts countless drivers at serious risk and exploits insurance coverage meant to protect people when they truly need it. Jaime Huiracocha and Victor Murillo only cared about the thousands of dollars they stood to make from this dangerous and illegal insurance fraud scheme. Thanks to the hard work of our investigators, these criminals drove themselves straight into the hands of justice, and today’s sentencing confirm that. I thank the Queens District Attorney’s Office and Governor Hochul for continuing to prioritize the safety of New Yorkers.”

Anyone who thinks they may have been a victim of insurance fraud is urged to call the Insurance Fraud Hotline at 888-372-8369 or visit dfs.ny.gov/consumers to file an online report.

Huiracocha, 53, of Brooklyn, pleaded guilty on May 27 to insurance fraud in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. Queens Supreme Court Justice Jerry Iannece sentenced him on August 24 to one to three years in prison on the first charge and one year in jail on second charge, to run concurrently.

Murillo, 34, of Brooklyn, pleaded guilty to staging a motor vehicle accident in the second degree, insurance fraud in the fourth degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. Justice Iannece sentenced him on August 3 to two years in prison on the first two charges and one year incarceration on the third charge to be served concurrently.

DA Katz said that, according to the investigation and charges, between August 24, 2024, and October 16, 2024, Huiracocha and Murillo conspired to stage car crashes on New York City highways as part of an insurance fraud scheme. The defendants recruited individuals to participate in three separate car crashes and enticed them with promises of cash payouts.

Murillo acted as the designated driver for these staged crashes during this time frame. During each of the staged collisions, the defendant suddenly and deliberately stepped on the brakes of the car he was driving, causing the vehicle behind him to rear-end the car he was operating. In one instance, when the car behind him braked in time to avoid a collision, Murillo reversed into that vehicle and caused a crash.

During the three staged crashes, Huiracocha drove in a separate vehicle and trailed Murillo on the highway. He was in constant communication with his co-defendant and directed Murillo on exactly when and how to stage the collisions. After the crashes, Murillo climbed into the front passenger seat of each vehicle and exited the car from the passenger side. His actions were obscured by passengers in the back seat who covered the rear window with a tarp or plastic bag.

Murillo then fled the scene each time in a getaway car that had pulled in front of the car he drove. In the three collisions, the remaining occupants of Murillo's car exited the vehicle and pretended to be injured. The occupants were directed by Huiracocha to visit specific medical clinics after the crashes.

The three staged crashes occurred on the following dates:

- On August 24, 2024, at approximately 8 a.m., a 47-year-old woman from Long Island was driving westbound on the Belt Parkway near the Erskine Street exit. A silver Honda Civic driven by Murillo merged into the lane directly in front of her and stopped, forcing her to collide with the car.
 - Dashcam footage from the victim's car captured Murillo exiting the Honda and entering a red Kia that had stopped directly in front of it after the crash.
- On October 3, 2024, at approximately 12 p.m., a 44-year-old man from New Jersey was driving his tractor trailer in the middle lane of the Nassau Expressway near Cross Bay Boulevard in Lindenwood. A Nissan Xterra, driven by Murillo suddenly cut into the middle lane directly in front of the truck. The truck driver was unable to avoid hitting the Nissan.
 - Murillo got out of the Nissan, entered another vehicle that stopped in front of him and quickly left the scene. At the same time, a female claimed to the truck driver that she had been the one driving the Nissan during the collision. After the getaway car drove off with Murillo, another car stopped at the scene. Huiracocha exited and spoke to the truck driver.
- On October 16, 2024, at approximately 12 p.m., a 31-year-old woman from Queens was driving north in the left lane of the Belt Parkway in Rosedale near the Nassau County border.
 - A Honda Civic driven by Murillo cut in front of the woman's vehicle and abruptly came to a stop. The victim was forced to step on her brakes to avoid a collision. Murillo then quickly reversed the Honda and backed into the victim's vehicle, damaging both her car and the Honda.
 - Dashcam footage showed not only the collision, but also a red Kia Sportage following the woman's car. After the crash, the Kia stopped in front of the Honda. Murillo, who climbed to the front passenger's seat, exited the Honda from that side. He then entered the Kia and was driven away from the scene.

Defendants Maikel Martinez and Ivon Matus-Martinez, participants in the crashes, also pleaded guilty and are expected to be sentenced next month.

The investigation was conducted by Detective James McCormack, Detective Michael Fahrbach, and Sergeant Daisy Ramirez of the NYPD Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad along with Lieutenant Charles Hyland of the NYPD Criminal Enterprise Division, Investigator Michael Dominguez and other members of the New York State Department of Financial Services, and Investigative Accountant Silvana Sutich of the District Attorney's Financial Frauds Bureau.

Assistant District Attorney Talia Vogel, Deputy Chief of the District Attorney's Financial Frauds Bureau, prosecuted the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Hana C. Kim, Bureau Chief,

and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Joseph T. Conley III.

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

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