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Release #45-2006
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2006

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**D.A. BROWN: FORT TOTTEN JANITOR SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR STEALING
ARMY RESERVIST'S IDENTITY AND MAKING CREDIT CARD PURCHASES**

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a former Fort Totten janitor who pleaded guilty earlier this month to stealing the personal identity of a United States Army reservist and making hundreds of dollars in clothing purchases has been sentenced to 1½ to 3 years in state prison.

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Edwin Gomez, 35, of 177-09 110 Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, who was employed as a janitor for about three days by a subcontractor providing maintenance services at the United States Army Base Fort Totten in Bayside, Queens. The defendant pleaded guilty on February 1, 2006 to Identity Theft in the Second Degree before Queens Criminal Court Judge Pauline A. Mullings who imposed today's sentence.

District Attorney Brown said, "The victim in this case had served his country overseas and returned home to find that someone had stolen his identity and, allegedly, the identity of more than a hundred of his fellow soldiers. Following the defendant's arrest in November 2005, each of the reservists whose identity may have been compromised was contacted to see if there were any additional identity theft 'damage'. Fortunately, the monetary damage was minimal as the defendant was apparently just getting started using the stolen reservists' identities."

According to the District Attorney, in pleading guilty, the defendant admitted that between October 1, and November 14, 2005 he removed documents containing the name, rank and serial number of complainant Michael Bitondo from the Fort Totten military base and kept the information in his home. He also admitted that he used the information to open a Neiman Marcus credit card account in Bitondo's name and used the card to make more than \$500 in clothing purchases from the retail store's website.

The District Attorney said that the investigation began in November 2005 after Bitondo returned from a tour of duty in Kuwait, discovered that there were unauthorized credit card charges on his credit report and made a complaint to his local precinct in Staten Island that his identity had been stolen. The victim's complaint sparked a joint investigation by the United States Postal Inspection Service, New York Division, the New York City Police Department's 103rd Precinct and the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau that resulted in the defendant's arrest and the filing of criminal charges.

The case was investigated by Postal Service Investigator Glen McKechnie of the United States Postal Inspection Service, New York Division under the supervision of Team Leader Alex Malaiko and Assistant Inspector-In-Charge Phillip Bartlett and Inspector-In-Charge, New York Division Ron Walker and Detective Louis Morensky of the NYPD's 103rd Precinct Detective Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Patrick Wing and the overall supervision of Louis Croce, Chief of Detective Borough Queens and Chief of Detectives George Brown.

Assistant District Attorneys Danielle S. Fenn and Diane M. Peress, Deputy Chief, of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau prosecuted the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.