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**D.A. BROWN: HIGH SCHOOL GYM TEACHER ARRAIGNED
ON CHARGES OF MENACING THREE STUDENTS WITH KNIFE**

Allegedly Used Weapon In Attempt to Force Them To Exercise

District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a Long Island City public school teacher has been arraigned on charges of menacing three students with a kitchen knife during gym class.

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Mark Omeltchenko, 46, of 35-16 205th Street in Bayside, who has taught in the City's public school system for fifteen years. The defendant has been charged with three counts of Menacing in the Second Degree, two counts of Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Fourth Degree, two counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child and three counts of Harassment in the Second Degree. If convicted, he faces up to one year in jail.

The District Attorney said that, according to criminal complaints filed in the case, at approximately 10:15 a.m. on March 16, 2006, the defendant was conducting a gym class at Aviation High School, located at 45-30 36th Street in Long Island City, when he instructed his students to do exercises. When two female students – ages 14 and 15 – refused, it is alleged that the defendant went to his office and returned with a kitchen knife, which he placed against their arms with the dull side facing down and rubbed the blade back and forth while saying, 'Go or I'll flip it.' It is similarly charged that during the same gym class the defendant pointed the knife at the neck of a third student – a 17-year-old boy suffering from autism – while grabbing him and placing him in a head lock.

The defendant was arraigned yesterday evening before Queens Criminal Court Judge Alex J. Zigman, who released the defendant on his own recognizance and set a return date of April 25, 2006.

The arrest was made by Police Officer Wilfredo J. Arroyo of the New York City Police Department's 108th Precinct.

It should be noted that a complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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