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**D.A. BROWN: THREE SOMALI NATIONALS CHARGED
WITH ILLEGALLY POSSESSING 13 POUNDS OF KHAT**
Drug Allegedly Smuggled Into the United States From Overseas

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that three Somali nationals – one from Manhattan and two from out of state – have been charged with illegally possessing thirteen pounds of khat, which has a street value of approximately \$5,400.

District Attorney Brown stated that khat is a flowering shrub native to northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Individuals chew khat leaves because of the stimulant effects. Fresh khat leaves contain cathinone – a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendants have been charged with possessing an illegal substance. While khat may be socially acceptable in certain foreign cultures, it is classified as a schedule-one narcotic here in the United States, which puts it in the same legal category as heroin and cocaine.”

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Tanad M. Sheekh, 43, of 400 West 150th Street in Manhattan, Abdiwelid Hoosh, 30, of 214 Garfield in Kansas City, Missouri, and Ali H. Farah, 35, of 3159 Heathrow Court in Columbus, Ohio. The defendants, who were arraigned last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge Fernando M. Camacho, are each charged with second-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, a Class A-II felony punishable by up to eight and one-third years in prison. Judge Camacho set bail of \$15,000 for defendant Hoosh and \$25,000 each for defendants Farah and Sheekh.

The District Attorney said that, according to the criminal charges, at about 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 13, 2006, the defendant Hoosh signed for and picked up a package that had been shipped to the United States from England (where khat is legal) via United Parcel Services (UPS) to one of its offices located at 190th Street and Horace Harding Expressway. After leaving the UPS office with the package, Hoosh allegedly entered a Dodge Stratus that was occupied by his two co-defendants – Sheekh and Farah. When police officers from the NYPD’s Narcotics Borough North approached the car, the package had allegedly been open on the rear seat and the three defendants were ingesting the khat. Inside the package was thirteen pounds of khat which contained more than ten (10) grams of cathinone.

District Attorney Brown’s Narcotics Investigations Bureau will prosecute the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Wilbert J. LeMelle, Bureau Chief, Karen J. Friedman, Deputy Chief and Mark L. Katz, Supervisor and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editor: E-version of press release posted at www.queensda.org.