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**D.A. BROWN: LONG ISLAND MAN CHARGED WITH ASSAULTING POLICE OFFICER
BY DRAGGING HIM ALONG SOUTH JAMAICA STREET WITH HIS AUTOMOBILE**

Faces Up to 25 Years in Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a Valley Stream resident has been charged with seriously injuring a New York City police officer by dragging him at a high rate of speed down a busy street with his automobile.

District Attorney Brown said, "This case underscores yet again the dangers faced by New York City police officers. There is nothing 'routine' or 'predictable' about a traffic stop. Every stop has the potential for danger. In this instance, the defendant was armed with a formidable weapon – his car – which he allegedly used to seriously injure one of New York's Finest."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Walter Hurdle, 50, of 7 North Cloverfield Road in Valley Stream. The defendant is charged with Aggravated Assault Upon a Police Office, Assault on a Peace or Police Officer, Assault in the First and Second Degrees, Reckless Endangerment in the First Degree, Reckless Driving, Criminal Possession of Marijuana in the Fifth Degree and Driving by Unlicensed Operator. If convicted, he faces up to 25 years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, at approximately 8:20 p.m. on January 18, 2007, uniformed police officers observed the defendant sitting bent over in the driver's seat of a 2001 GMC Denali at the intersection of 122nd Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard and rolling an object. When police approached the vehicle and requested to see the defendant's driver's license, he allegedly was unable to produce one. Police also allegedly observed that when the defendant's driver door opened, they saw what appeared to be a glassine envelope fall onto the vehicle's running board and the defendant drop an object which was later recovered from inside the vehicle and which appeared to be a marijuana cigarette.

The District Attorney said that when police asked the defendant to step out of the vehicle, he allegedly refused and instead sped off at a high rate of speed with Sergeant John Pagnotta caught inside the vehicle's driver side door. According to police officers at the scene, the defendant's vehicle struck their parked patrol car, crushing Sgt. Pagnotta who was pinned in between the patrol car and the inside of the defendant's door. It is further alleged that the defendant refused to stop and dragged Sgt. Pagnotta approximately fifteen to thirty feet – with Sgt. Pagnotta yelling and screaming in pain – before the sergeant was thrown free and tumbled another ten to fifteen feet into oncoming traffic on Sutphin Boulevard, where a vehicle had to abruptly stop – coming within a foot of striking Sgt. Pagnotta. The defendant then allegedly fled the scene at a high rate of speed in the opposite direction of oncoming traffic, causing vehicles to swerve out of the way. The defendant's vehicle was discovered abandoned a few blocks away.

Sgt. Pagnotta was transported to a local Queens hospital, where he is being treated for a broken pelvis, several broken ribs, a fractured backbone and a dislocated shoulder.

District Attorney Brown said that the defendant surrendered yesterday afternoon to detectives at the 113th Police precinct and is currently being held pending arraignment later today in Queens Criminal Court.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Rosemary Chao of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney James W. Evangelou, Bureau Chief, and Robert J. Hanophy, Deputy Chief and the overall supervision of Senior Executive Assistant District Attorney for Trials James C. Quinn and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Trials John H. Larsen.

It should be noted that criminal charges are merely accusations and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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