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Release # 67-2007
www.queensda.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2007

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**DA BROWN: JAMAICA AIR TRAIN STATION CLEANING CREW SUPERVISOR
ARRAIGNED ON CHARGES OF TAMPERING WITH WITNESS IN SEAN BELL CASE**

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a cleaning crew supervisor at the Port Authority's Jamaica Air Train Station has been charged with tampering with a witness during the Queens Grand Jury investigation into the Sean Bell police shooting.

District Attorney Brown said, "One of the major purposes of grand jury secrecy is to obtain the full cooperation of witnesses and to protect them from outside interference that might affect their testimony. This office will not tolerate the intimidation of, or tampering with, witnesses and is committed to the vigorous prosecution of those who engage in such conduct."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Melvin Cordero, 46, of 65 Highland Place in Brooklyn. The defendant, a supervisor of Meridian Cleaning in Jamaica, Queens, a Port Authority subcontractor, was arraigned earlier today before Queens Criminal Court Judge Robert M. Raciti on the charges of two counts of third-degree intimidating a victim or witness, a class E-felony, two counts of second-degree coercion and two counts of fourth-degree tampering with a witness. If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to a criminal court complaint, between November 25, 2006 and March 16, 2007 - following the Sean Bell police shooting - in front of the Jamaica Air Train Station, the defendant on numerous occasions told one of his employees, a cleaner and alleged witness to the shooting, to not tell anyone what occurred on November 25, 2006 in relation to a police shooting under investigation by a Queens Grand Jury or he would go to jail, be deported and get fired. The defendant is additionally alleged to have on March 15, 2007, at about 1:30 p.m., called the witness on his cell phone and stated, "Don't testify, you are going to get fired, go to jail and be deported." The defendant is further alleged, on that same day, March 15th at 10:00 p.m., called the defendant on his cell phone and stated, "The building is full of blacks that are going to kill you and you are going to be deported and fired," causing the employee fear of physical harm and losing his job.

According to the District Attorney, the defendant was arrested yesterday by detectives of the Port Authority Police Department after the victim had made a complaint to his manager about the defendant's alleged intimidation and the PAPD referred the matter to the District Attorney's Integrity Bureau. The defendant was arraigned earlier today before Judge Raciti who ordered him held bail in the amount of \$5,000 bond/\$2,500 cash and set a return date of April 2, 2007.

According to District Attorney Brown, the defendant is alleged to have made an oral statement to a Port Authority detective after his arrest, stating, "I opened up my big mouth and I shouldn't have and all I was trying to do was save my job. I told him he could be deported and he was going to be arrested and fired. I have a criminal record and I didn't want the job to find out that I had a criminal record."

The investigation was conducted by Detective John Reilly of the Port Authority Police Department's JFK Detective Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant William Hanley and the overall supervision of Inspector John Kassimatis, Commanding Officer.

Assistant District Attorney James M. Liander, Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Integrity Bureau is prosecuting the case under 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 a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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

