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**D.A. BROWN: HOWARD BEACH MAN CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED MURDER
IN KNIFE ATTACK OF UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER**

Defendant Also Charged With Reckless Endangerment and DUI; Faces Up To 25 Years In Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a 51-year-old Howard Beach man who crashed his car into a brick wall near his home has been charged with driving while under the influence of alcohol, threatening four school-aged pedestrians with a steak knife and the attempted murder of one of the police officers who had responded to the crash scene.

District Attorney Brown said, "Less than one month after a young NYPD officer fresh from the Police Academy was brutally assaulted while patrolling the streets of Queens, another young officer found himself also putting his life on the line when he responded to a car crash and was attacked with a steak knife by the vehicle's allegedly drunken driver. Fortunately, his NYPD shield protected the officer from sustaining serious injury or even death. This case underscores yet again the dangers faced by New York City police officers in the performance of their duty."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Joseph Leonardi, 51, of 162-27 90th Street in Howard Beach. The defendant is charged with first- and second-degree attempted murder, attempted aggravated assault upon a police officer, first-degree attempted assault, first-degree reckless endangerment, second-degree menacing, resisting arrest, endangering the welfare of a child, fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon and operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If convicted, he faces up to 25 years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, the defendant was erratically driving a 1996 Buick at approximately 5:00 p.m. yesterday, March 1, 2007, when he mounted the sidewalk in front of St. Helen's Church – located at 158-49 83rd Street in Howard Beach – and, narrowly missing pedestrians, crashed into a brick wall. The defendant is alleged then to have exited his damaged vehicle armed with a steak knife and have chased four school-aged children at the scene while waving the weapon at them.

The District Attorney said that NYPD Police Officer Stuart Ingram, 22, and Sergeant Daniel Peterson, both of the 106th Precinct, responded to the radio call. In attempting to subdue the defendant, it is alleged that the defendant tried to stab Officer Ingram in the chest but instead hit the officer's NYPD-issued shield, causing the knife to break into several pieces. The officers then tried to handcuff the defendant who allegedly struggled to keep his hand from being placed behind his back and refused to relinquish the broken knife. Once handcuffed, the two officers allegedly observed the defendant – who refused to submit to an intoxilyzer exam – to have a strong odor of an alcoholic beverage on his breath and watery eyes. Leonardi allegedly admitted that he had about three martinis before dinner.

District Attorney Brown said that Officer Ingram was transported to a local Queens hospital where he was treated for a laceration to his finger and released. The defendant is currently being held pending arraignment later today in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Victoria Garcia and Michael Annibale of the New York City Police Department's 106th Precinct Detective Squad under the overall supervision of Deputy Inspector John Doherty, Commanding Officer. Police Officer Brian Drechsel, also of the 106th Precinct, made the arrest.

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

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