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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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D.A. BROWN: SOUTH OZONE PARK FATHER ARRAIGNED
IN BEATING DEATH OF HIS ONE YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER

Faces Up to Life in Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a South Ozone Park man who was babysitting for his thirteen-month-old daughter allegedly beat her to death because she would not stop crying.

District Attorney Brown said, "This helpless, innocent child was relying on her father to care for her. Instead he allegedly beat her senseless and left her alone to die. The defendant was supposed to protect his child, not harm her. This very disturbing case will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Peter O'Keeffe, 35, of 150-20 117th Street, in South Ozone Park. O'Keeffe, who is employed as a bookkeeper at a Manhattan printing company, was ordered held without bail today after his arraignment in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens on charges of murder in the second degree and endangering the welfare of a child. If convicted, he faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges, O'Keeffe was babysitting for his daughter, Jessica O'Keeffe, on the afternoon of Saturday, November 3, 2007, when he became frustrated because she would not stop crying. He is accused of beating her, shaking her, throwing her to the floor and fleeing without getting help for the baby.

The child was found unconscious by her mother when she returned home Saturday after spending the day shopping with a friend. Jessica was rushed by ambulance to Jamaica Hospital where doctors declared her dead at 7:25 p.m.. She suffered a fractured skull, head trauma, human bite marks to her right arm and multiple bruises.

According to statements made to police following his arrest, O'Keeffe admitted to having taken cold medication after his wife left to do some errands and that when Jessica began crying he lifted her out of the playpen and shook her before throwing her face down on the floor. O'Keeffe allegedly fled after turning Jessica's body over and seeing blood coming from her head. He allegedly admitted not trying to help the baby because he thought she was dead. He allegedly then went to an ATM for cash and fled to Philadelphia. The following day he came back to New York and was arrested at his mother's house in Brooklyn.

Queens Criminal Court Judge Alex Zigman ordered that O'Keeffe be placed in protective custody and put on suicide watch. His next court date was set for November 26, 2007.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Cary O'Connor, of the NYPD's Queens Homicide Task Force and Detectives Maurice Larrea and John Martin, of the NYPD's 106th Precinct's Detective Squad.

Assistant District Attorney Mina Q. Malik, of the District Attorney's Special Victim's Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Marjory D. Fisher, Bureau Chief, Kenneth M. Appelbaum and Lucinda C. Suarez, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

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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