



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000**

Release # 199-2007
www.queensda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2007

CONTACT: KEVIN RYAN
HELEN PETERSON
MERIS CAMPBELL
(718) 286-6315

**D.A. BROWN: SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD CHARGED WITH DRUG POSSESSION
FOLLOWING FLIGHT FROM DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO JFK**

Allegedly Swallowed 80 Balloons Totaling Nearly a Kilo of Heroin With a Street Value of \$500,000

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that Anthony Cruz, 16, has been charged with possessing nearly a kilo of heroin after he passed 80 balloons of heroin at the John F. Kennedy International Airport hospital facility. Cruz allegedly swallowed the heroin before boarding a flight from the Dominican Republic.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant is alleged to have been approached in the Dominican Republic and agreed to be a drug mule, swallowing 988 grams of heroin contained in 80 balloons with a street value of at least \$500,000. Not only was he endangering the citizens of New York City by bringing narcotics into their neighborhoods but he could have suffered fatal injuries if any of the balloons burst and the heroin entered his system."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Anthony Cruz, of La Vega, Dominican Republic. Cruz was arraigned late this afternoon before Queens Criminal Court Judge Suzanne Melendez on charges of first-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and third-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance. Cruz, who was remanded without bail and ordered to return to court on November 9, 2007, faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal complaint, the defendant was stopped by a Customs and Border Patrol Inspector inside the American Airlines terminal at JFK on October 23, 2007, following his arrival from the Dominican Republic and agreed to an x-ray of his body, which revealed numerous bags of suspected narcotics in his stomach.

Cruz was taken to the John F. Kennedy airport hospital facility where he passed 80 bags allegedly containing heroin over the next 48 hours. In statements to authorities, Cruz allegedly admitted he was approached by an individual who offered him an airline ticket to New York, \$300 U.S. dollars, and 500 Dominican pesos if he would take the heroin to New York. Cruz allegedly agreed and swallowed the 80 bags of heroin prior to boarding American Airlines Flight 834 to John F. Kennedy Airport.

Port Authority Director of Public Safety/Police Superintendent Samuel J. Plumeri Jr. said. "We work closely with our many law-enforcement partners at JFK Airport to vigilantly fight illegal drugs entering this country. We remain committed to this fight and will continue to devote every available resource to address this serious issue."

District Attorney Brown thanked the Port Authority Police Department and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency for their cooperation in the arrest of the defendant.

Assistant District Attorney Jesse D. Rutter, of the District Attorney Brown's Narcotics Investigations Bureau, is prosecuting the cases under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Wilbert J. LeMelle, Bureau Chief, Karen J. Friedman, Deputy Bureau 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 a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

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