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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**MOTORIST SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN STATE PRISON**  
**FOR SERIOUSLY INJURING UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER**  
*Dragged Officer Along Queens Street Following Traffic Stop*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a Valley Stream resident convicted of seriously injuring a New York City police officer by dragging him at a high rate of speed down a busy Queens street following a car stop has been sentenced to 20 years in state prison.

District Attorney Brown said, "The imposed sentence is fitting considering the seriousness of the crime for which the defendant was convicted. With depraved indifference for human life or the authority of police, the defendant dragged his victim – a uniformed New York City Police Officer – along a major Queens thoroughfare in his efforts to get away. As a result of the defendant's actions, the officer has been forced to give up the job he loved because of the permanent nature of his injuries and to endure a lifetime of pain. Let this case be a sobering reminder of the demanding and dangerous challenges that police officers face each day in protecting the public."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Walter Hurdle, 53, of 7 North Cloverfield Road in Valley Stream. Hurdle, who has been in jail in lieu of \$500,000 bail since his arraignment on January 21, 2007, was found guilty on July 21, 2009, of first- and second-degree assault, assault on a police officer and reckless driving following a two-week jury trial before Queens Supreme Court Justice Richard L. Buchter, who imposed today's determinate term of twenty years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to trial testimony, at approximately 8:20 p.m. on January 18, 2007, uniformed police officers observed Hurdle rolling an object while sitting bent over in the driver's seat of a 2001 GMC Denali at the intersection of 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard. When police approached the vehicle and requested to see his driver's license, Hurdle was unable to produce one. When Hurdle's driver door opened, they saw what appeared to be a glassine envelope fall onto the vehicle's running board and Hurdle 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 Hurdle to step out of the vehicle he 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, Hurdle's vehicle struck their parked patrol car, crushing Sgt. Pagnotta who was pinned in between the patrol car and the inside of Hurdle's door. Hurdle 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. Hurdle then fled the scene at a high rate of speed in the opposite direction of oncoming traffic, causing vehicles to swerve out of the way. Hurdle's vehicle was discovered abandoned a few blocks away.

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

Senior Assistant District Attorney Patricia M. Theodorou, of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau, prosecuted the case 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 Attorneys for Trials John H. Larsen and Robert J. Masters.

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