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ALLEGED WRONG-WAY DRIVER ARRAIGNED ON MANSLAUGHTER CHARGES
IN HIT AND RUN DEATH OF QUEENS BAR OWNER

Defendant Apprehended By Authorities In Connecticut; Faces Up To 15 Years In Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a 36-year-old Brooklyn man who was allegedly driving the wrong way on the Long Island Expressway service road last month has been charged with manslaughter, among other crimes, for a fatal hit and run crash with a livery cab that took the life of its passenger, a Maspeth bar owner, and injured its driver, among others. The defendant was apprehended yesterday in Connecticut by the U.S. Marshals New York/New Jersey Regional Fugitive Task Force following an anonymous tip to the New York City Police Department's Crime Stoppers hotline.

District Attorney Brown said, "A local business owner tragically lost his life in a hit-and-run crash that also injured two other individuals. It is alleged that the defendant, instead of staying and assisting in anyway he could, fled the scene and remained at large for approximately a month until being apprehended yesterday by authorities. The alleged reckless actions displayed by the defendant warrants that this case be vigorously prosecuted."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Peter Rodriguez, 36, of 76 DeSales Place in Brooklyn. Rodriguez was arraigned today before Queens Criminal Court Judge Gene R. Lopez on a criminal complaint charging him with the crimes of second-degree manslaughter, second- and third-degree assault, criminally negligent homicide and a felony violation of VTL 600-2A (Leaving the Scene Without Reporting). Rodriguez, who faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted, was ordered held without bail and to return to court on December 2, 2011.

The District Attorney said that, according to the criminal charges, Rodriguez was operating a 2002 gray Chrysler Sebring westbound at approximately 6:50 a.m. on October 15, 2011, at a speed in excess of the posted 30 miles per hour limit in the eastbound lanes of the Midtown Expressway (Long Island Expressway Service Road) when he collided head on with an eastbound 2003 black Lincoln Town Car. As a result of the crash, George Gibbons, 37, who was sitting in the rear seat of the Town Car, was thrown forward into the front seat and into the dashboard. Mr. Gibbons, who was the owner of The Gibbons' Home in Maspeth, was removed to a local Queens hospital, where he was pronounced dead from multiple blunt force injuries to the head, neck and chest. The Town Car's 59-year-old driver also sustained severe head, neck and back injuries which required hospitalization.

It is further alleged that Rodriguez and his passenger immediately fled the scene. However, the passenger later returned to the scene and was hospitalized for injuries to his head.

The investigation was conducted by the New York City Police Department's Highway Patrol District Accident Investigation Squad.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Robert S. Ciesla, of the District Attorney's Homicide Investigations Bureau, and Assistant District Attorney John Kosinski, Chief of the District Attorney's Vehicular Homicide Unit, are prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Peter T. Reese, Bureau Chief, and Peter J. McCormack III and Richard B. Schaeffer, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, and 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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