



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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

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

**FLUSHING MAN CHARGED WITH POSSESSING LARGE QUANTITIES
OF UNTAXED CIGARETTES AND COUNTERFEIT TAX STAMPS**

*Approximately 1,400 Cartons Of Cigarettes, 14,500 Alleged Counterfeit Tax Stamps
And \$32,000 In Cash Seized During Execution of Search Warrants*

Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a Flushing resident has been charged with second-degree trademark counterfeiting and other charges following the seizure of approximately 1,400 cartons of cigarettes, 14,500 counterfeit Virginia tax stamps and \$32,000 in cash from two apartments in Flushing.

District Attorney Brown said, "Tobacco bootleggers who illegally bring thousands of untaxed cigarettes from other locations to New York for resale cheat the public by failing to contribute their fair share of the dollars. For every dollar or two dollars a store owner or consumer saves by purchasing an untaxed pack of cigarettes, the honest taxpayer becomes the victim by being forced to dip into his or her pocket to pay higher taxes. In today's case, it is alleged that the defendant was seeking to shortchange New York State and New York City out of approximately \$200,000 in tax revenue."

District Attorney Brown identified the defendant as Ricky Lin, 33, of 132-09 Maple Avenue in the Flushing section of Queens. Lin was arraigned on Friday, January 27, 2012, before Queens Criminal Court Judge Stephanie Zaro on a criminal complaint charging him with 14,547 counts of first-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument, one count of criminal possession of forgery devices, one count of second-degree trademark counterfeiting, 517 counts of third-degree trademark counterfeiting and two violations of the New York State tax law. Lin, who faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted, was ordered held on \$15,000 bail and to return to court on February 10, 2012.

The District Attorney said that, according to the criminal charges, as part of an ongoing, long term investigation into the illegal sale of untaxed and counterfeit cigarettes, investigators were in the vicinity of Lin's Maple Avenue residence on January 26, 2012, when they allegedly observed Lin leave the location while wearing a knapsack and pushing a bicycle with an attached basket containing an open plastic shopping bag in which were cartons of cigarettes. Investigators allegedly recovered 18 cartons of cigarettes from Lin's knapsack and the bicycle basket, as well as \$284 in cash from Lin's person and keys to his residence and another apartment at 132-21 Pople Avenue.

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In executing two court-authorized search warrants that day, it is alleged that police recovered 3,945 counterfeit Virginia tax stamps from the Pople apartment and 1,397 cartons of cigarettes, 10,602 counterfeit Virginia tax stamps and approximately \$32,000 in cash from Lin's residence. Also allegedly recovered from Lin's residence were assorted papers which appeared to be records of orders, sales and customers.

District Attorney Brown said that all cigarette packages sold in New York City must bear a joint New York City/New York State tax stamp and only a licensed stamping agent can possess untaxed cigarettes and affix the tax stamp on the packages.

The arrests are just the latest results brought about by the District Attorney's Crimes Against Revenue Unit which proactively investigates and prosecutes individuals and businesses that deliberately fail to pay tax obligations associated with legal and illegal activities. To date, more than four million untaxed cigarettes have been seized, forfeited, and surrendered.

District Attorney Brown thanked the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, specifically Investigator Alex Schwartzman, of its Investigations Division, Investigator Dominick DiGennaro, of Allegiance Protection Group, Inc., and the Altria Group, the parent company of Phillip Morris USA.

The investigation was conducted by Detective James Monaco of the New York City Police Department's Queens District Attorney's Squad under the supervision of Sergeant Francis Teran, Lieutenant Keith Gallagher and Captain John M. Zanfardino, and the overall supervision of Chief Louis M. Croce, Jr. and Chief of Detectives Phil T. Pulaski.

Assistant District Attorneys Andrew H. Kaufman, Chief of the Crimes Against Revenue Unit, and Michael-Sean Spence will be prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Anthony M. Communiello, Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Special Proceedings Bureau, and Oscar W. Ruiz, Deputy Bureau Chief, 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.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.