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TWO MEN CHARGED WITH “THEFT” OF QUEENS HOME
AFTER FORECLOSURE AUCTION

*Allegedly Forced Homeowner To Illegally Vacate Property;
Then Boarded Up Residence To Prevent His Reentry*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by New York City Sheriff Joseph Fucito, today announced that two Forest Hill men, who were the winning bidders at a foreclosure auction, have been charged with illegally evicting a Richmond Hill homeowner from his lawful residence and then breaking-in and boarding up doors and windows prior to legally assuming ownership and taking possession of the property.

“More and more we are seeing individuals who are dealing with distressed properties unscrupulously taking advantage of the situation to benefit themselves,” said District Attorney Brown. “The defendants in this case are accused of taking the law into their own hands and bullying a homeowner into vacating his residence so that they would not have to deal with a housing court eviction proceeding.”

Sheriff Fucito said, “We are not going to stand for anyone circumventing the law. Our office is working diligently to protect homeowners and tenants who may fall victim to the various unscrupulous and predatory behavior in real estate transactions. People have the right to live undisturbed in their homes and these two individuals are accused of violating the due process rights of the tenant at the address. The Sheriff’s Office stands ready to arrest individuals who violate this basic principle.”

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Semyon (a/k/a Sam) Muratov, 34, of 64th Avenue, and Yuriy (a/k/a Erick) Munarov, 31, of 65th Road, both in Forest Hills, Queens. The two defendants were arraigned last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge Bruna DiBiase on a criminal complaint charging each of them with second-degree burglary, third-degree criminal mischief, second-degree criminal trespass and unlawful eviction. The defendants, who each face up to 15 years in prison if convicted, were ordered held on \$5,000 bond/\$2,500 cash bail and to return to court on May 5, 2015.

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District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, Muratov placed a down payment of \$25,000 on a residence located on 111th Street in Richmond Hill, Queens, at a foreclosure sale on Friday, January 9, 2015. However, the sale had not yet gone to closing.

That same day, it is alleged that Muratov and Munarov went to the 111th Street property and advised the 59-year-old homeowner that they had bought his house at an auction and that he had to vacate the premises. When the homeowner asked for proof of the sale, the defendants allegedly refused to supply any evidence and instead told the homeowner that he had to give them the keys to the house and that they would be back in a couple of days to make sure that he had left.

It is additionally alleged that when the two defendants returned to the property on January 12th and they couldn't gain entry, they broke the doorframe and deadbolt lock and pushed in the front door. They then allegedly told the homeowner that he could take a few things with him. When he indicated that he had nowhere to go, the defendants allegedly gave him \$200 in cash to find a place to stay. At that point, the homeowner grabbed some important documents and left the location. When he returned later to the house, he allegedly discovered that all of the first-floor doors and windows had been boarded up and chains had been placed in the door lock areas of the front door, preventing him from gaining entry to his house which contained most of his personal belongings.

An investigation by District Attorney Brown's Economic Crimes Bureau and the Office of the New York City Sheriff allegedly revealed on May 6, 2014, there was a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale on the 111th Street homeowner's property, although the homeowner maintained that he was unaware of the foreclosure proceeding. A review of documents allegedly revealed that an estranged son of the homeowner was served with the notice back in 2012. Although the mortgage lender auctioned off the property on January 9, 2015, Muratov would not assume ownership of the property until there was a closing with full payment for the property and a transfer of the deed.

Even after a closing, Muratov would have had to proceed with a lawful eviction proceeding of the homeowner. He and Munarov did not have any authority to show up at the residence, direct the homeowner to vacate the premises and board up the house.

The investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Christine E. Burke, of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau, Detective Joseph J. LaSpina, of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau, and by Sheriff Investigators Teresa Russo, Adrian Duncan, Veronica Marroquin and Michael Trano, of the New York City Sheriff's Office.

Assistant District Attorney Burke, of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and Christina Hanophy and Kristen A. Kane, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, 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 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 on www.queensda.org