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JFK PASSENGER CHARGED WITH HATE CRIMES
FOR ASSAULT ON MUSLIM AIRLINE EMPLOYEE

Defendant Allegedly Invoked President's Name During Hateful Rant

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a Massachusetts resident has been charged with, among other crimes, assault, unlawful imprisonment, menacing and harassment as hate crimes for attacking an airline employee in the Delta Sky Lounge at John F. Kennedy International Airport last night.

District Attorney Brown said, "The bigotry and hatred that the defendant is accused of manifesting and acting upon have no place in a civilized society – especially in Queens County, the most culturally diverse county in the nation. Crimes of hate will never be tolerated here and when they do, regrettably occur, those responsible will be brought to justice."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Robin A. Rhodes, 57, of Worcester, Massachusetts. Mr. Rhodes was arraigned before Queens Criminal Court Gia Morris on a criminal complaint charging him with third-degree assault as a hate crime, second-degree unlawful imprisonment as a hate crime, third-degree menacing as a hate crime, first-degree harassment as a hate crime, third-degree assault, second-degree unlawful imprisonment, second-degree aggravated harassment, menacing and first-degree harassment. Rhodes, who faces up to four years in prison if convicted, was ordered held on \$50,000 bond/\$30,000 cash bail and to return to court on February 8, 2017.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges, the female victim, a Delta employee who wears a head scarf (hijab), was sitting in her office in the Delta Sky Lounge (Terminal 2, JFK Airport) between approximately 7:10 p.m. and 9:45 p.m. on January 25, 2017, when Rhodes, who had arrived from Aruba and was awaiting a connecting flight to Massachusetts, came up to the door and stated, "Are you [expletive deleted] sleeping? Are you praying? What are you doing?" Rhodes then allegedly punched the door, which hit the back of the victim's chair. It is alleged that when the victim asked Rhodes what she did to him, he stated, "You did nothing but I am going to kick your [expletive deleted] ass. Rhodes then allegedly kicked the victim in the right leg. In an effort to get away, the victim moved to a corner of the office. However, Rhodes allegedly kicked the door, stepped into the office and blocked her from leaving the office.

It is additionally alleged that when an individual came over to the office and tried to calm Rhodes down, Rhodes moved away from the door and the victim ran out of the office to the lounge's front desk. It is alleged, however, that Rhodes followed her and got down on his knees and began to bow down in imitation of a Muslim praying and shouted, "[Expletive deleted] Islam, [Expletive deleted] ISIS, Trump is here now. He will get rid of all of you. You can ask Germany, Belgium and

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France about these kind of people. You will see what happens.”

According to the charges, the victim suffered substantial pain and redness in her right leg and was placed in fear of physical injury, annoyance and alarm as a result of Rhodes’ alleged actions.

At the time of his arrest, Rhodes allegedly told police, in sum and substance, “I guess I am going to jail for disorderly conduct. I couldn’t tell if it was a man or woman because their back was to me and they had something covering their head.”

The investigation was conducted by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department.

Assistant District Attorney Michael E. Brovner, the Chief of the Violent Criminal Enterprises Section which is within District Attorney Brown’s Gang Violence and Hate Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mariela Palomino Herring, Bureau Chief, and Michelle E. Goldstein, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Senior Executive Assistant District Attorney for Trials James C. Quinn and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Laura M. Henigman.

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 at www.queensda.org