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**BROOKLYN MAN CHARGED WITH STAGING CAR CRASH ON BELT PARKWAY IN
ROSEDALE**

Defendant was Occupant of Car that Purposefully Backed into Another Driver's Vehicle on Busy Highway

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Maikel Martinez was charged with staging a motor vehicle accident, reckless endangerment and other crimes after being in a car that allegedly cut off another driver on the Belt Parkway, forcing that driver to come to a stop. The car the defendant was in then reversed into the victim's car.

DA Katz said: "The defendant and others allegedly staged a crash on a busy highway and rammed an unsuspecting driver with their vehicle after they forcibly stopped her in the left lane of the Belt Parkway. Countless lives were jeopardized due to this incredibly reckless conduct. This investigation is very much ongoing, and I encourage anyone who suspects that they may have been a victim in a staged car crash to call the NYPD Office of Fraudulent Collision Investigation Squad at 718-822-5403."

Martinez, 28, of 14th Avenue in Dyker Heights, was arraigned last night on charges of staging a motor vehicle accident in the second degree, criminal mischief in the third degree, reckless endangerment in the first degree, conspiracy in the fifth degree and insurance fraud in the fifth degree. Criminal Court Judge Jerry Iannece ordered him to return to court on January 7, 2025.

If convicted, he faces up to 2 1/3 years to seven years in prison.

According to the charges, on October 16, 2024, at approximately 11:11 a.m., Asphia Natasha was driving north in the left lane of the Belt Parkway in Rosedale near the Nassau County border. The woman's vehicle was equipped with both a front and rear dashboard camera.

At that time, a silver Honda Civic cut in front of Natasha's vehicle and then came to a stop. The victim was forced to step on her brakes to avoid a collision. The Honda then quickly backed into Natasha's vehicle, damaging both her car and the Honda. The occupants of the Honda held up what appeared to be a plastic tarp in the rear window area of the car that partially obstructed the victim driver's view inside the Honda, and the occupants of the vehicle switched their seating arrangement within the Honda.

After the collision, four people exited the car including a woman who got out of the driver's side and a man who identified himself as Maikel Martinez and said the purported driver was his wife. Another woman and man who exited the vehicle are presently unidentified.

The footage surrounding the crash showed a red Kia Sport following Natasha's car. After the crash, the Kia stopped in front of the Honda and the fourth occupant of the Honda exited that car and entered the Kia, which then left the scene.

Martinez was apprehended Thursday after arriving in New York on a flight from Ecuador.

The investigation is ongoing.

Assistant District Attorney Josefina Martinez, Section Chief in the District Attorney's Frauds Bureau, is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Joshua Trachtenberg under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Joseph T. Conley III, Bureau Chief, Hana C. Kim, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

