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**DRIVER WITH SUSPENDED LICENSE INDICTED FOR STRIKING  
E-BIKER WHILE FLEEING POLICE**

*Defendant Allegedly Sped Through 26 Red Lights, 14 Stop Signs and Against Flow of Traffic to Evade  
Police in Astoria  
Victim Sustained Severe Head Trauma and Remains in Critical Condition*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Harold Vega was indicted by a grand jury on charges of assault, leaving the scene of an incident and other related crimes after allegedly slamming into an e-bike rider while fleeing police in Astoria on July 3. Vega allegedly ran through 26 red lights and 14 stop signs while weaving in and out of traffic. During the incident, the defendant allegedly struck the bicyclist, which launched the victim into the air and caused him to sustain severe head trauma. The victim remains hospitalized.

District Attorney Katz said: “This was a high-speed chase in the very busy neighborhood of Astoria, which endangered the lives of every single person on the street. In order to evade police, Harold Vega blew through 26 red lights and 14 stop signs, drove against traffic and on the sidewalk, and through crowded streets at unsafe speeds on a hot summer afternoon. During the pursuit the defendant struck an innocent bicyclist who had the right of way, leaving a husband and father in critical condition with severe head trauma. The defendant’s alleged disregard for the rules of the road is shocking.”

Vega, 46, of Jackson Avenue in the Bronx, was arraigned today on a 13-count grand jury indictment charging him with assault in the first degree; reckless endangerment in the first degree; assault in the second degree; unlawful fleeing a police officer in a motor vehicle in the second degree; leaving the scene of an accident without reporting; resisting arrest; criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree; reckless driving; aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the second degree; operating a motor vehicle or permitting it to be operated in this state without having in full force financial security; operating or driving a motor vehicle without a license; operating or driving an unregistered motor vehicle; and driving without proper license plates.

Queens Supreme Court Justice Michael Hartofilis continued remand and set a return date of September 4. If convicted of the top count, Vega faces a potential maximum sentence of 25 years in prison.

According to the charges:

- On July 3, at approximately 4:33 p.m., an officer from the 114<sup>th</sup> Precinct observed a Gray 2003 Nissan Altima with a tinted cover obstructing its license plate at the intersection of 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 21<sup>st</sup> Street.
- Upon doing a computer check, the officer learned that the license plate attached to the vehicle belonged to a different car.
- The officer attempted to conduct a traffic stop by activating lights and sirens on his unmarked police vehicle at which point Vega stopped for approximately four seconds before he entered the intersection against a steady red light, made a U-turn and sped away.
- During the car chase that followed, the officer observed Vega speed through 25 additional steady red lights, 14 stop signs, drive against the flow of traffic, disregard double yellow lines, weave in and out of traffic, nearly strike multiple pedestrians, and drive onto the sidewalk to evade capture.
- When Vega drove through a steady red light at 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Crescent Street, he struck the victim, Arturo Aguirre Matias, who was riding an electric bicycle with pedals on Crescent Street. The victim was riding inside the marked bike lane with the flow of traffic and a green traffic signal in his favor.

- Vega did not stop and proceeded to drive recklessly until he collided with a parked car so forcefully that the airbags deployed.
- The entire vehicle chase spanned approximately 11 minutes through residential and commercial areas, including the blocks around Astoria Park on a hot summer afternoon.
- After Vega collided with the parked car he then fled on foot and was confronted by good Samaritans, who slowed him down enough that police could catch up to him near 24<sup>th</sup> Drive and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Vega resisted arrest when police tried to handcuff him.
- The victim was transported to a local hospital where he continues to receive treatment for severe head trauma as a result of the collision.
- At the 114 Precinct, police recovered one glassine enveloped containing a quantity of cocaine from Vega's pants pocket.
- At the time of the incident, the defendant's driver's license was suspended, the car he was operating was unregistered and uninsured, and the defendant had been convicted of the crime of unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the preceding 18 months.

The investigation was conducted by members of the District Attorney's Vehicular Homicide Unit as well as the NYPD's Collision Investigation Squad.

Assistant District Attorney Brian Cox of the Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Jonathan Selkove, Vehicular Homicide Unit Chief, John W. Kosinski, Homicide Bureau Chief, and Karen Ross, Homicide Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

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

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