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**EIGHTEEN CHARGED IN THEFT OF MINI BOTTLES OF LIQUOR AND DUTY-FREE
MERCHANDISE FROM JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

*Airport Employees Allegedly Pilfered More Than \$750,000 Worth of Liquor
And Other Items During Last Five Months*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Port Authority of NY and NJ Inspector General Robert E. Van Etten, announced today that 18 airport workers – fifteen present and former truck drivers employed by LSG Sky Chefs, the food and beverage subcontractor for American Airlines, and three security guards employed by FJC Security Services Inc., and SCIS Air Security Corporation – have been arrested and charged in connection with the widespread theft of tens of thousands of mini bottles of liquor and other items from John F. Kennedy International Airport over the last five months.

It is alleged that during the investigation – dubbed “Operation Last Call” – the defendants pilfered more than 100,000 of the mini bottles, as well as duty-free items – such as larger bottles of liquor, perfume, and cartons of cigarettes – with an overall estimated retail value of more than \$750,000.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendants are alleged to have pilfered over the past five months more than three-quarters of a million dollars worth of mini bottles of liquor and duty-free merchandise from Kennedy Airport for subsequent sale in the local underground economy. Employee pilferage is a significant problem for many companies, not just at the airports but throughout the entire metropolitan area. In the last analysis, however, it is the consuming public that bears the burden of thefts such as those that are alleged to have occurred in this case.”

The District Attorney continued, “Perhaps more troubling is that airport security personnel entrusted with guarding against theft and maintaining security at the airport were allegedly involved in the scheme. If a terrorist wanted to breach airport security, the alleged actions of these defendants gave them a back-door opportunity to do so.”

Inspector General Van Etten said, “The defendants arrested in Operation Last Call violated and sold out their position of trust and access to the secure areas of the airport, including access to commercial aviation, all for personal greed. More egregious, is the conduct of three security guards employed to secure, protect and report crime at JFK International Airport but who also were involved in selling out their positions of trust to line their pockets.”

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Inspector General Van Etten continued, “What is extremely troubling in this post-9/11 world is that all of these individuals had unfettered access to the secure aeronautical area of the airport and that gives pause for concern that they could have or would have sold out their access and trust for more nefarious or sinister purposes. These arrests will serve notice to all that the Port Authority of NY & NJ will not tolerate criminal misconduct at its facilities. The Port Authority Office of the Inspector General and its law enforcement partners will aggressively identify, investigate and bring to justice those who corrupt the integrity and security of our airports and facilities.”

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal charges, the defendants are alleged to have stolen more than 57,000 mini bottles of various brands of liquor – including Dewars scotch, Absolut vodka, Courvoisier cognac and Baileys liqueur – worth approximately \$400,000 between April 2012 and August 2012. The defendants are also alleged to have stolen a quantity of duty-free merchandise – such as perfume, quart bottles of liquor and cigarettes with an estimate worth of \$40,000 during the same period.

In addition, a court-authorized search warrant was executed at the residence of one of the defendants – a retired Sky Chefs driver – this morning. Among the alleged items seized as a result of that warrant were 500 to 600 garbage bags filled with mini liquor bottles (each bag containing approximately 100 bottles) worth between \$385,000 and \$420,000, as well as \$34,000 in cash.

District Attorney Brown explained that LSG Sky Chefs., a subcontractor for American Airlines at JFK Airport, assembles the liquor mini bottles that are loaded onto commercial aircraft to be served to passengers in-flight. Following a flight, Sky Chefs employees are responsible for transporting any unsold merchandise from the aircraft back to a storage facility on the airport grounds. The Sky Chefs drivers remove the bottles from the food/beverage storage carts onboard the aircraft and place them in thick medium-sized grey plastic bags which are used on American Airlines aircrafts.

In carrying out the thefts, according to the charges, Sky Chefs drivers would remove the unsold mini liquor bottles from the plane and either transport them to their personal vehicles in the employee parking lot or sell the stolen liquor to co-workers on the loading docks. Depending on the type and brand of liquor, black market prices allegedly ran from fifty-five cents for a bottle of Baileys to a dollar twenty-five for a bottle of Courvoisier. In-flight a mini bottle of Dewars, Courvoisier or Baileys is sold for seven dollars. It is further alleged that security guards were given quantities of the mini liquor bottles in return for not carefully inspecting the Sky Chef vehicles passing through the checkpoint areas with the grey bags.

The alleged scheme was uncovered earlier this year when the Port Authority Inspector General’s office developed information that Sky Chefs employees were stealing liquor at Kennedy Airport. Based on that information, the Offices of the Port Authority Inspector General and the District Attorney’s Airport Investigations Unit commenced a joint investigation. In the ensuing weeks and months, investigators conducted extensive surveillance of the defendants and made 57 undercover buys of over 57,000 min-bottles of liquor. The evidence allegedly obtained from those observations and buys formed the factual basis for the criminal complaints that will be filed later today in Queens Criminal Court.

The defendants are variously charged with third-degree bribe receiving, receiving a reward for official misconduct, second-, third- and fourth-degree grand larceny and second-, third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property. **(See Addendum for further details)**

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District Attorney Brown said that most of the defendants were arrested earlier today after they were summoned to attend an important security meeting at the airport.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Steven Poulos, Arthur Maisano and John Tucci, of the Port Authority Inspector General's Office, under the supervision of Director of Investigation Michael Nestor and Assistant Director of Investigations Salvatore A. Dalessandro.

Assistant District Attorney Catherine C. Kane, Chief of the District Attorney's Airport Investigations Unit, is prosecuting the cases under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Gerard A. Brave, Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau, and Assistant District Attorney Mark L. Katz, 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.

ADDENDUM

SKY CHEFS TRUCK DRIVERS (15)

EDGAR AQUINO-ACOSTA, 24, of 345 Fountain Avenue in Brooklyn, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

DOMINGO A. DURAN, 62, of 139-12 109th Road in Jamaica, Queens (retired), is charged with second-degree grand larceny and second-degree criminal possession of stolen property. A court-authorized search warrant was executed at Duran's house earlier today. Among the items alleged seized were 50,000 to 60,000 mini liquor bottles and \$34,000 in cash. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison.

FRANKLIYN GILL, 64, of 103-18 116th Street in Richmond Hill, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

KELVIN GOMEZ-NUNEZ, 32, of 1743 Norman Street in Ridgewood, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

ISAACS HERNANDEZ, 24, of 306 Arlington Avenue in Brooklyn, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

ELVIN IMBERT, 37, of 87-06 104th Street in Richmond Hill, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

ABLAM KLOUTSE, 44, of 102-30 134th Street in Richmond Hill, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

WILLIAM LEYVA, 48, of 1716 40th Street in North Bergen, New Jersey, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

FREDDIE LUCAS, 36, of 240-06 146th Avenue in Rosedale, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

RICHARD LUNA, 50, of 50 Westcott Street in Inwood, New York, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison.

MAXIME MATHE, 39, of 197-06 110th Avenue in St. Albans, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-

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degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, she faces up to seven years in prison.

RAYMOND PRENZA, 36, of 110 West 130th Street in Manhattan, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

ISAAC ROMOLEON, 51, f 168-10 111th Avenue in Jamaica, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

ARKADIUSZ SZMITKO, 32, of 60-22 Linden Street in Elmhurst, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

GEORGE TOREZ, 30, of 118-92 Riverton Street in St. Albans, Queens, is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

SECURITY GUARDS (3)

JOSE BAEZ, 50, of 72-15 62nd Street in Glendale, Queens, is employed by FJC Security and is charged with third-degree bribe receiving, receiving a reward for official misconduct, petit larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

MARTIN MOLINA, 50, of 34-19 43rd Street in Long Island City, Queens, is employed by FJC Security and is charged with third-degree bribe receiving, receiving a reward for official misconduct, second-degree grand larceny and second-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison.

STALIN PINOSSIMBANA, 20, of 107-16 75th Street in Ozone Park, Queens, is employed by SCIS Security and is charged with third-degree grand larceny and third-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

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