



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

**LONG ISLAND MAN INDICTED FOR MANSLAUGHTER IN FATAL ROAD RAGE CRASH ON
THE LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY**

*Defendant Blocked Car Creating Chain Reaction Crash That Killed Passenger in For-Hire Vehicle; Girlfriend
Indicted on Insurance Fraud Charge*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Shaqeeem Douglas was arraigned on an indictment charging him with manslaughter and related crimes for the death of 41-year-old Pradeppa Desai, who was a passenger in a for-hire Lyft SUV that Douglas cut off while both cars were traveling on the Long Island Expressway on August 14. Douglas' alleged actions caused the SUV to come to a stop on the busy highway when it was then hit by a Jeep which propelled the SUV into the defendant's car. Desai, who was in New York on a business trip, was critically injured and died later that day. Douglas' girlfriend, Ariana Seratan, is also being charged in connection with the crash for falsifying business records.

District Attorney Katz said: "The defendant is accused of driving with a conscious disregard for others and as a result caused the death of a visitor to our city, a 41-year-old husband and father. Road rage has no place on highways or on our streets. We will hold responsible those who, out of selfishness or out of anger, put others on our roads in harm's way."

Douglas, 26, of Maple Street in Freeport, was arraigned yesterday on an indictment charging him with manslaughter in the second degree, assault in the second degree, leaving the scene of an incident without reporting, tampering with physical evidence, reckless driving and driving too slow. Seratan, 26, of Maple Street in Freeport, was arraigned on charges of falsifying business records in the first degree and insurance fraud in the fifth degree. If convicted, Douglas faces up to 15 years in prison and Seratan faces up to four years.

Supreme Court Justice Michael Hartofilis continued remand for Douglas and ordered him and Seratan to return to court November 20.

According to the charges, on August 14, at approximately 3 p.m., video surveillance footage showed a gray Honda sedan driven by Douglas traveling on the Long Island Expressway just west of the Van Wyck Expressway. The car was following closely behind a yellow Toyota SUV operating as a Lyft, with two passengers, including Pradeppa Desai, in the left lane of the LIE.

In an effort to pass the Toyota, Douglas moved to the center lane and right lane before going back to the left lane and cutting in front of the SUV. Douglas began to slow down despite there being no vehicle directly in front of him. The driver of the Toyota moved to the center lane to avoid the slowing Honda driven by Douglas. The defendant then moved the Honda to the center lane in front of the SUV and came to a complete stop, despite there being no obstructions in front of it.

As the Toyota was forced to come to a stop behind the Honda, the operator of a Jeep Wrangler, which was traveling at a normal speed, attempted to go around the two vehicles unexpectedly stopped in the center lane. The Jeep hit the rear of the SUV which, in turn, rear ended the Honda. The Jeep rolled onto its side and came to rest on the right shoulder of the highway.

Desai, who was in the back seat of the SUV along with another passenger, was taken to a local hospital with severe head and body trauma. He died later that day.

Douglas fled the scene in the Honda, which suffered considerable damage to its rear in the collision. Douglas pulled off the highway and parked on Waldron Street where, according to video surveillance, three men exited the vehicle, and Douglas removed a piece of a yellow bumper from the rear bumper of the Honda and threw the piece on the sidewalk. He also removed the rear bumper from the Honda and discarded it before getting back in the car and driving away.

A gray Honda Accord with a missing rear bumper was recovered on August 16 in the driveway of the defendant's Freeport home. Seratan, who is the registered owner of the Honda and in a relationship with Douglas, made a false report to her insurance company claiming she was driving the car and that it was rear ended by another vehicle that left the scene.

Assistant District Attorney Brian Cox of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Jonathan Selkove, Unit Chief of the District Attorney's Vehicular Homicide Unit, John Kosinski, Bureau Chief, Karen Ross, 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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