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**FOUR INDIVIDUALS CHARGED IN EXTORTION PLOT**  
**TO TAKE OVER QUEENS CARTING COMPANY**  
*Containers Allegedly Stolen and Trucks Torched*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly and Thomas McCormack, Chair of the New York City Business Integrity Commission (“BIC”), today announced that criminal charges have been brought against three former employees of a Maspeth carting company and a fourth individual for attempting to take over the carting business through a campaign of fear, intimidation, threats and theft.

District Attorney Brown said, “Today’s arrests follow a five-month investigation that included hundreds of hours of investigation, surveillance and intercepted telephone calls. This case represents another example of the partnership that exists in this City between law enforcement at all levels of government and is a reminder of our commitment to continue to aggressively enforce our laws to prevent the violence that too often is involved with those in the carting industry.”

Commissioner Kelly said, “Today's arrests reaffirm the New York City Police Department’s commitment to keeping the carting industry clean. I congratulate our detectives from the Organized Crime Investigation Division, as well as the Business Integrity Commission and the Queens District Attorney’s office.”

BIC Chair McCormack said, “The Business Integrity Commission is committed to investigating any allegation that carting companies engage in crimes that hurt the private sanitation industry in New York City. We will continue to work with the NYPD Organized Crime Investigation Division and the District Attorney’s office to conduct vigorous investigations of individuals who engage in illegal activities in the industry that we regulate. BIC will take administrative action to revoke the licenses of any carting company that is convicted of committing crimes in this industry. I wish to thank District Attorney Richard A. Brown and members of his Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau for their assistance in this investigation.”

District Attorney Brown identified the four defendants as Salvatore Lombardo, 37, of 36-02 Crescent Street in Astoria, Antonino Mistretta, 36, of 28-35 41<sup>st</sup> Street, also in Astoria, and Anthony LaPuma, 44, and his wife, Lisa LaPuma, 41, both of 1292 America Avenue in Babylon, Long Island.

The four defendants are charged with third-degree grand larceny, third-degree criminal possession of stolen property and fifth-degree conspiracy (to commit extortion and grand larceny). The defendant Lombardo was additionally charged with second-degree attempted grand larceny (extortion), first-degree falsifying business records, first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon and possessing a rifle without a permit. The defendant Lisa LaPuma was additionally charged with first-degree falsifying business records and first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, and the defendant Mistretta was additionally charged with first-degree falsifying business records. If convicted, at a minimum, they each face up to seven years in prison.

The defendants were arraigned this afternoon before Queens Criminal Court Judge Suzanne Melendez. The defendant Lombardo was ordered held on \$100,000 bail and the other three defendants were each ordered held on \$25,000 bail. Their next court date is June 6, 2007.

According to the charges filed in the case, between July and September 2006, Vincent Giuliano, the owner of City Haul Carting, Inc., a private carting company, became aware that approximately 205 of his trade waste containers – including three 30-yard, two 20-yard and 200 mini-containers – were missing from the locked, fenced-in truck yard that he had been using at the intersection of Rust and 56<sup>th</sup> Streets in Maspeth. The containers were estimated to be worth a total of \$39,000.

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Just prior to the containers being stolen, it is alleged that three City Haul employees had quit – truck drivers Antonino Mistretta and Anthony LaPuma, and LaPuma’s wife, Lisa, who had worked as a secretary – and that they had possessed a key to the truck yard. Shortly thereafter, City Haul owner Giuliano allegedly noticed that Mistretta and the LaPumas had altered his company’s containers and were using the containers to service his former customers under the name of a new carting company: Kat Demolition and Karting Corp.

According to investigators, it is common practice for carters to mark their ordinarily interchangeable containers with their own identifying colors and markings. For example, City Haul containers are painted orange with green trim and have the company’s initials, CH, cut through the side metal walls. Carters who steal other companies’ containers will often attempt to alter such markings. In this case, it is alleged that City Haul containers had been altered so that the initials CH cut into the sides now loosely spelled out the word, KAT.

It is further alleged that several days after Giuliano had his attorney send a letter to Kat Demolition demanding the return of the containers and more than \$30,000 of accounts receivable illegally collected from his former customers, he received a threatening letter that his trucks “would be torched.” On the evening of September 23, 2006, the FDNY responded to a fire at the truck yard in which two City Haul trucks had caught fire for no apparent accidental or natural causation. Later, on January 4, 2007, it is alleged that Giuliano was approached by another carter, the defendant Lombardo, who made a threatening gesture – a slashing motion across his throat – and demanded that Giuliano “get out of the lot” because the coveted lot now belonged to him. Thereafter, Giuliano allegedly would observe Mistretta and LaPuma driving by the truck yard, after which Lombardo would allegedly show up and reiterate his threats and demand that Giuliano leave the yard.

In January 2007, following Giuliano’s reporting of the matter to the NYPD and BIC, an undercover detective assigned to the NYPD’s Organized Crime Control Bureau began posing as the “new owner” of City Haul. On January 11, 2007, the undercover officer allegedly received an angry telephone call from Lombardo who demanded that he “get out of the lot.” The undercover refused, stating he was the new owner of City Haul, at which point Lombardo allegedly demanded an in-person meeting. Four days later, Lombardo allegedly arrived at the lot and, having identified himself as “Sal from Sagana Industries,” once again demanded that the undercover officer get off the lot while at the same time making a slashing motion across his neck and throwing his hands up like he was about to strike the undercover officer. At the meeting, Lombardo also allegedly stated that he, Mistretta and LaPuma would now be using the lot and that Kat Demolition belonged to him, as well as to Mistretta and LaPuma who were his partners.

On March 23, 2007, according to the charges, an altered City Haul container was recovered by the investigative team at a job site in Manhattan, and on intercepted telephone conversations, Mistretta, Lombardo and Anthony LaPuma were overheard plotting to confront the undercover officer at the City Haul truck lot regarding the recovered container. That night, trucks registered to Lisa LaPuma and Lombardo were allegedly observed surveilling the truck lot and, fearing a violent confrontation, the undercover detective deliberately stayed away from the lot. Three days later, Mistretta was allegedly overheard on the telephone soliciting another carter to create phony purchase receipts for the remaining stolen 20- and 30- yard containers and talking to Lisa LaPuma about filing a police report against City Haul for taking the container. Mistretta allegedly then told Lisa to wait so that he and Anthony LaPuma could talk and decide how to handle the matter. On March 30, 2007, during a sit-down with the undercover detective at a Queens diner, Mistretta and Anthony LaPuma allegedly claimed that they acquired the City Haul containers by three distinctively different means – including that they went into the truck lot and took them.

As the investigation began winding down, NYPD and BIC officers met with Lisa LaPuma at the Kat truck yard, located at 151 Anthony Street in Brooklyn, on May 9, 2007. Although Lisa LaPuma claimed Kat was her company, she had difficulty explaining to investigators how to actually get to the truck yard. Mistretta was also present at the meeting and pointed out a City Haul container which had the CH markings altered to read KAT and further stated that they had another similar 20-yard container located at a Queens job site.

The following evening, a BIC detective met with the LaPumas at their Long Island residence, at which time Anthony LaPuma allegedly admitted that “we took the containers from [City Haul’s] yard” and stated that he handled all the packer work – meaning servicing customers who were doing construction and demolition work using mini containers – and that Mistretta handled all of the roll-off work – meaning he serviced the customers using the larger containers. At this meeting, Lisa LaPuma allegedly claimed that Kat Demolition was her company but that she worked from home.

On May 15, 2007, a search warrant was executed at Sagana Industries, located at 57-05 47<sup>th</sup> Street in Maspeth, which is owned and managed solely by Lombardo. In a locked black trailer within the truck yard to which Lombardo has the only key, NYPD detectives assigned to the BIC and BIC investigators recovered a loaded 9-mm. handgun, a .22-caliber rifle and ammunition, chukka sticks, a trident crossbow gun and a two-page list which appeared to contain a plan for dividing certain City Haul assets; specifically listing that “170 minis, 3 thirty box, 2 twenty box” will leave City Haul’s yard on “September 1, 2006.” Subsequently, in an intercepted telephone conversation, Lombardo was overheard discussing with another individual the fact that he is not allowed to have a gun without a license and asking the other individual to lie for him by claiming the rifle belonged to him.

All private carters wishing to cart construction and demolition debris in the City of New York must be registered with the Business Integrity Commission and carters are required to disclose all “principals” having a controlling ownership or supervisory interest in the company. Once approved by BIC, the carters are responsible for disclosing any changes in their written applications, including new principals, and must submit periodic renewal applications, which include any changes in the principals.

In the April 14, 2006, registration application for Kat Demolition filed by Lisa LaPuma, it lists her as the president and 100 percent owner of the company and Anthony LaPuma as merely a worker. There is no mention of Lombardo and Mistretta. On Lombardo’s June 29, 2004 registration application and his August 2, 2006, renewal application for Sangana Industries, he is listed as president and sole principal and owner. Thus, the complaint charges that Lisa LaPuma intentionally and purposely falsely filed the application with the City by failing to disclose the roles of her husband, Mistretta and Lombardo as the true principals of Kat Demolition. Lombardo is also charged with failing to disclose his interest as a principal in KAT, when he filed his renewal application for Sangana Industries with the BIC in 2006.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Angelo Barone of the Organized Crime Investigation Division, under the supervision of Sergeant Lee Chong and Lieutenant Jerome Pope, and the overall supervision of Inspector Brian O’Neill, working in direct conjunction with Ronald Cohen, Deputy Commissioner of Investigations and Enforcement for the Business Integrity Commission. Detective Al Schwartz, of the Queens District Attorney’s Detective Bureau, also assisted in the investigation, under the supervision of Lieutenant Franco Russo and the overall supervision of Lawrence J. Festa, Chief Investigator and Albert D. Velardi, Deputy Chief Investigator.

Assistant District Attorney Cathy C. Kane, of the District Attorney’s Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gerard A. Brave, Bureau Chief, and Marc P. Resnick, Deputy Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigation 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: E-version of this press release posted at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org)**