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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2014

Kings County District Attorney Ken Thompson Announces the Indictment of Five Members of the Williamsburg Neighborhood Watch Patrol for Gang Assault

Victim Loses Sight in One Eye; Defendants Face Up to 25 Years in Prison

Brooklyn, NY. Kings County District Attorney Kenneth P. Thompson today announced the indictment of five defendants for their participation in the brutal gang assault of Taj Patterson, a 23-year-old Fort Greene resident. The defendants, who are associated with the Williamsburg Safety Patrol Unit, a civilian neighborhood watch group, face multiple charges for allegedly beating Patterson in the early morning hours of December 1, 2013. The District Attorney said that a Kings County grand jury has indicted the following defendants: Pinchas Braver, 19; Joseph Freid, 25; Mayer Herskovic, 21; Aharon Hollander, 28; and Abraham Winkler, 39, for acting in concert to commit Gang Assault in the First Degree, and other related charges. If convicted, the defendants each face up to 25 years in prison.

“We simply cannot allow anyone walking on the streets of Brooklyn to be knocked to the ground, stomped and brutally beaten. Our streets must be free of such violence and everyone must adhere to the rule of law, including these defendants,” said District Attorney Ken Thompson.

Police Commissioner William J. Bratton said, “These indictments send a clear message that acts of vigilantism are unacceptable and cannot be condoned by the NYPD. I want to thank the NYPD’s investigators as well as the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office for their exceptional work in helping to bring these individuals to justice.”

The NYPD and the District Attorney’s Office launched an investigation to identify and prosecute the individuals who took part in the assault. According to court documents, the defendants began to chase Patterson along Flushing Avenue, while he was walking home in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Members of the patrol detained Patterson while investigating neighbors’ reports that he had damaged cars; however, they did not call the police. Despite the fact that

these reports of vandalism proved to be unfounded, the group, which had grown to approximately 15 members, surrounded Patterson, preventing him from continuing his walk home. When Patterson tried to get away from the group, he was held down, and savagely punched and kicked by a number of the males surrounding him, including these defendants.

Patterson sustained injuries to his head and body, the most serious of which was a torn retina and a broken eye socket, causing him to lose vision in his right eye. The beating ceased only when passersby arrived and threatened to take pictures of the group assaulting Patterson. All of the assailants fled the scene, leaving Patterson on the ground injured. None of the attackers were present when the police and an ambulance responded to 911 calls.

The case was investigated by Prosecutors from the Investigations Division of the Kings County District Attorney's Office, along with detectives from the New York Police Department Hate Crimes Task Force and the Intelligence Division.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.

Defendant Information:

Pinchas Braver DOB 6/10/94
Mayer Herskovic DOB 12/2/92
Abraham Winkler DOB 7/4/74
Joseph Fried DOB 7/27/88
Aharon Hollander DOB 12/13/85

Charges:

Gang Assault in the First Degree
Gang Assault in the Second Degree
Assault in the Second Degree
Unlawful Imprisonment in the First Degree
Unlawful Imprisonment in the Second Degree
Assault in the Third Degree
Menacing in the Third Degree

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Contact:

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