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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Robbery Defendant Charged With Soliciting Rikers Inmate To Kill Witness
Sentenced To 20 Years To Life In Prison On Underlying Case**

*Defendant Allegedly Tried To Hire Hit Man To Murder Witness
Before He Could Testify In Home Invasion Robbery*

Brooklyn District Attorney Ken Thompson today announced that a Brooklyn man convicted earlier this year for a home invasion robbery has been sentenced to 20 years to life in prison. The defendant is also charged in a separate indictment with conspiracy and solicitation to commit murder for enlisting a fellow Rikers Island inmate “to take care of a witness,” in his home invasion case.

District Attorney Thompson said, “This defendant invaded the sanctity of his victims’ home – terrorized an innocent family -- and then allegedly had the audacity to try to have him killed to keep him from testifying. Such utter contempt for the rule of law cannot be tolerated and warrants the 20 years to life sentence handed down.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Joseph Lombardo, 55, formerly of Brooklyn. He was sentenced yesterday by Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Suzanne M. Mondo to an indeterminate term of 20 years to life in prison. He was convicted of two counts of first-degree burglary, one count of second-degree robbery and one count of first-degree robbery on September 17, 2014, following a jury trial.

The District Attorney said that, according to trial testimony, Lombardo was arrested on February 1, 2013, for breaking into the West 2nd Street apartment of Janna Saleh on October 28, 2012. Saleh was at home with her three children, including her 11-year-old daughter, when the defendant and an unapprehended accomplice broke into her apartment at gunpoint after forcing a neighbor, Lyudmila Dushina, to knock on Saleh’s door. Once inside, the defendant and his cohort, who were both wearing ski masks, hoods and gloves, demanded money.

Meanwhile, according to trial testimony, the 11-year-old called her father, Hussein Saleh, who was at work downstairs in the family’s deli. Immediately after receiving the phone call, Hussein Saleh exited his store, which is around the corner from the Saleh residence, and saw the defendant and his accomplice running out of the building and subsequently take off their masks. Mr. Saleh recognized the defendant as “Joe,” an acquaintance who had frequented his deli several times a week for about a year.

The District Attorney said that following the defendant's arrest in February 2013, he was indicted on charges of first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary and other charges. Earlier this year, beginning in May 2014, he allegedly repeatedly solicited a fellow Rikers Island inmate to "take care of a witness," referring to Hussein Saleh, whom he knew could identify him at trial.

After repeatedly rebuffing the defendant's alleged solicitations, however, the inmate, who is known to the District Attorney's office, told investigators for the New York City Department of Corrections about Lombardo's alleged attempts to solicit his help in killing a witness, according to the investigation. During the defendant's alleged solicitation of his fellow inmate, the defendant allegedly stated: "I don't care how you do it, I just want him dead." The DOC investigators informed the District Attorney's office, and an undercover detective, who is assigned to the office, spoke with the defendant via telephone at Rikers and purported to be a killer for hire.

The defendant, however, insisted on seeing the "killer" in person, so they met at the Rikers Island visitor's area, on August 30, 2014, at which time the defendant allegedly proceeded to draw a map of the deli with instructions on how to access the apartment. He also allegedly suggested the undercover steal cash and cigarettes to stage the hit as a robbery gone bad, according to the investigation.

The defendant's alleged plot failed and the witness did testify against him at the trial of the underlying home invasion case.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Investigators Robert Galvin and Kolawole Olosunde, Senior Detective Investigator Phillip O'Rourke and Deputy Chief Investigator William Pettie, under the supervision of Chief John Bilich, of the Brooklyn District Attorney's Investigations Bureau.

The home invasion case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Hillary Schaeffer and Nicholas Ford of the District Attorney's Orange Zone Bureau. The solicitation case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Sarah Nadeau and Nicholas Batsidis, also of the Orange Zone. Both cases are under the supervision of Thomas Ridges, Chief of the Orange Zone Bureau.

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