



## Staten Island Advance

### Halloween terror cop under arrest

Teen's alleged abductor charged with using police computer in bid to discredit his accuser

Thursday, February 14, 2008

By **JOHN ANNESE** and **DOUG AUER**  
**STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- One of the two cops accused of abandoning a 14-year-old boy in a West Shore marsh on Halloween allegedly has compounded his trouble: He's charged with illegally using a police computer to dig up dirt on his young accuser.

Richard Danese, 28, of Great Kills, used a sergeant's log-in information to access police records and personal information pertaining to 14-year-old Reyshawn Moreno, as well as his father, James Hazel, according to authorities.

Moreno accused Danese and his partner in the North Shore's 120th Precinct, Thomas Elliassen, also 28 and from Great Kills, of taking him to some swampland near Chelsea and River roads, stripping him to his socks and shorts and stranding him there to teach him a lesson after an alleged egg-throwing incident.

Since then, Danese and Elliassen have been placed on modified duty.

Since his arrest yesterday, Danese -- a member of the NYPD since 2004 -- has been suspended without pay. That suspension can last up to 30 days, said an NYPD spokeswoman said.

Danese appeared earlier today before Judge John Wilson in Brooklyn Criminal Court, wearing a blue button-down shirt, dark slacks and a black leather jacket.

Through his attorney, Steve Barnwell of the Worth Longworth & London firm in Manhattan, Danese pleaded not guilty.

He has been charged with computer trespass -- a felony punishable by 1 1/3 to four years in prison if convicted at trial -- and official misconduct, a misdemeanor.

The prosecution noted that while placed on modified duty, Danese was re-assigned from the 120th Precinct to the Brooklyn Gang Squad office. There his duties included accessing arrest reports and criminal histories, prosecutors explained.

However, using a sergeant's code, Danese also accessed Hazel's records 38 times and Moreno's records once, prosecutors claim.

Danese had neither permission nor the authority to do so, prosecutors said.

A supervisor spotted the printouts on Danese's desk, next to a computer, and Danese admitted to a detective he had in fact printed them out, said prosecutors.

Although the prosecution had asked for a \$10,000 bail, Danese was released on his own recognizance.

While most released individuals exit the court via the main entrance, Danese -- wearing sunglasses -- was whisked out a rear door and into a waiting unmarked police car.

His lawyer declined comment following the arraignment.

After hearing of Danese's arrest yesterday, Moreno's lawyer, Jason Leventhal, called on the NYPD to take a deeper look at the officer's on-the-job conduct.

"Once again, Richard Danese has demonstrated his absolute disregard for the law. Clearly, he has no moral compass. The thought that this man was issued a badge and a gun is frightening," Leventhal said.

"The Police Department should investigate every one of Danese's arrests, every civilian complaint, and every stop-and-frisk to determine how many citizens are victims of his rogue conduct."

Moreno's mother, Telisa Hazel, speaking through Leventhal, expressed "shock" that Danese would print out her husband's criminal-justice history.

"Obviously, (Danese) will continue to break the law until he's held accountable," Ms. Hazel said. "James' past has nothing to do with what they did to Reyshawn."

Danese most recently was stationed in an administrative post in the Manhattan court section, a police spokeswoman said.

Danese and Elliassen are facing grand jury proceedings in connection with the Halloween incident.

Though initially charged with a misdemeanor count of unlawful imprisonment, the grand jury is sifting possible felony charges against the duo.

William J. Smith, a spokesman for District Attorney Daniel Donovan, confirmed that grand jury proceedings "have been commenced" against the officers but declined to comment further.

Leventhal has called for Elliassen and Danese to be charged with kidnapping, which carries a maximum five to 25 years in prison. The grand jury also may be mulling first-degree unlawful imprisonment charges, a lesser felony that stipulates one and one-third to four years in prison.

Elliassen and Danese allegedly caught Moreno throwing eggs at a car at around 8:30 p.m. Halloween on the corner of Arlington Place and South Avenue in Mariners Harbor. Instead of arresting him, they put him in the back seat of their cruiser and drove him to the swamp instead of the 120th Precinct stationhouse.

The way Leventhal tells it, the two cops ordered Moreno out of the car and onto his chest and jabbed him repeatedly in the ribs with their boots while his hands were cuffed behind him. They decided to abandon him after a call came over the police radio, Leventhal said, uncuffing him and stripping him to his socks and gym shorts.

Moreno put his shirt and sneakers back on and took off running down the railroad tracks, the lawyer said. But when he spotted headlights on the road near the tracks, he thought the two cops had come back and removed his white shirt and sneakers to run through the darkness undetected.

He ended up in the Burlington Coat Factory mall, where he found a security guard to help him.

John Annese and Doug Auer are news reporters for the Advance. They may be reached at [annese@siadvance.com](mailto:annese@siadvance.com) and [auer@siadvance.com](mailto:auer@siadvance.com).

© 2008 Staten Island Advance

© 2008 SILive.com All Rights Reserved.