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**FOUR INMATES INDICTED IN BRUTAL GANG ASSAULT OF CORRECTION
OFFICER; KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS AND FRACTURED SPINE**
Teen Defendants Face Up To 25 Years in Prison

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark today announced that four Rikers Island inmates have been indicted on Gang Assault and related crimes for attacking a Correction Officer, causing serious injuries including a fractured spinal column.

District Attorney Clark said, "No one should suffer such horrendous injury while performing his duty as a civil servant. We will work hard to bring justice for this officer, who continues to recover. This indictment sends the message that gang violence will not be tolerated on Rikers Island. If convicted, these defendants could face 25 years in prison."

District Attorney Clark said the defendants, Steven Espinal AKA Jefe Balla, 18, of Lancaster, PA.; Samson Waltson AKA Bam Balla, 18, of Creston Avenue, the Bronx; Nazeem Francis AKA Naz Balla, 18, of Queens; and Devin Burns AKA Dev Balla, 18, of Third Avenue, the Bronx were indicted on first-degree Gang Assault, Assault on a Peace Officer, Police Officer, Fireman or Emergency Medical Services Professional; second-degree Gang Assault and three counts of second-degree Assault.

Defendants Espinal, Waltson and Francis were arraigned yesterday before Bronx Supreme Court Justice George Villegas. Bail was set for Espinal at \$500,000, \$330,000 for Francis and \$300,000 for Waltson. They are due back in court on June 20, 2018. Burns is expected to be arraigned later this week. If convicted of the top charge, they face up to 25 years in prison.

According to the investigation, on February 10, 2018, inside the George Motchan Detention Center, Espinal allegedly began the assault, striking Correction Officer Jean Roston Souffrant, 39, in the head. The other inmates allegedly joined in the attack, punching, kicking and throwing objects at the officer causing him to lose consciousness. CO Souffrant suffered a fractured spinal column and head injury.

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The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney James Brennan, Deputy Bureau Chief of the Rikers Island Prosecution Bureau under the supervision of Deanna Logan, Chief of the Rikers Island Prosecution Bureau, and the overall supervision of Stuart Levy, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division and Jean T. Walsh, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Assistant District Attorneys Tiesha Peal, Sarah Clements and Carmen Martinez of the Rikers Island Prosecution Bureau, DOC Investigators Timothy Fries and Anthony Scommma, DOC Liaison and Investigator Scott Frank, and Trial Prep Assistant Kathleen McDonald.

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