

ATLANTIC COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

4997 Unami Boulevard, Mays Landing, NJ 08330

Theodore F. L. Housel

Prosecutor

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
Feb. 17, 2010
2 Page (s)

For further information contact:
Madelaine Vitale 609-909-7855
609-457-7359

MAYS LANDING – A second suspect charged in connection with the death of a New York man found dead last month in an Atlantic City hotel room appeared in court today where he was advised of his rights and formally heard the charges against him, Atlantic County Prosecutor Ted Housel announced.

Anwar Belton, 29, of Jersey City, is charged with felony murder, aggravated manslaughter and robbery for his alleged role in the Jan. 25 killing of Victor Castillo, 27, of College Point in Queens. It is alleged that during the course of a robbery he killed Castillo, according to Assistant Prosecutor William Merz.

During the court proceeding Superior Court Judge Michael A. Donio advised Belton of his rights and set bail at \$1 million full cash, Merz stated.

Belton was arrested in Mahwah, Bergen County, on Sunday during a motor vehicle stop in which he provided false information to police. Authorities charged Belton with aggravated assault for the alleged assault on Castillo and transported to the Atlantic County Justice Facility. Prosecutor Housel upgraded the charges today based on Atlantic County Medical Examiner Dr. Hydow Park's final report that listed Castillo's cause of death as asphyxia due to physical assault including neck compression.

Belton's co-defendant, Ericka Pugh, 26, of Harlem in New York, was charged with aggravated assault and endangering an injured person in connection with Castillo's death. Her bail is \$150,000 full cash. She remains in custody in New York pending extradition proceedings, Prosecutor Housel said.

On Jan. 25 at 3:30 a.m., Atlantic City police responded to a 911 call for a disturbance in a room at the hotel located at 3601 Pacific Avenue. Upon arrival, the officers discovered a man, later identified as Castillo, and notification of next of kin was made, Prosecutor Housel stated.

Prosecutor's Office Major Crimes Unit Detective Joseph Rauch, assigned from the Atlantic City Police Department, conducted the investigation under the supervision of Sgt. William Anton. The Hudson County Prosecutor's Office and the New York City

Police Department and the Mahwah Police Department in Bergen County, also assisted.

Felony murder is a first-degree crime that, if convicted, an individual could face 30 years to life in prison and a \$200,000 fine. Aggravated manslaughter is a first-degree crime that carries a prison term of 10 to 30 years and robbery carries a term of up to 20 years in prison. The charges are all subject to the No Early Release Act, which requires a defendant to serve 85 percent of a prison term before being eligible for parole.

*****These charges are merely an accusation and not proof of guilt. In all criminal cases, a charged defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.**

Anyone with information involving serious crimes is asked to call the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office at 609-909-7800 or go to the Prosecutor's Office Web site at <http://www.acpo.org/tips.html> and provide information by filling out the form anonymously on the Submit a Tip page. People can also call Crime Stoppers at 609-652-1234 or 1-800-658-8477 (TIPS) or visit the Crime Stoppers Website at <http://www.crimestoppersatlantic.com/>. Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and indictment of those who commit crimes in Atlantic County.