



Ex-cop charged in jailing probe

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A former Nassau County police detective faces criminal charges because he let a man he arrested stay in jail for a crime he knew the man had not committed since he was in jail on a minor charge when the crime occurred.

Nicholas Lemma, 52, of Holbrook, was arrested early last month and released in his own custody. He is due back in Nassau District Court in Hempstead on March 11.

He is charged with official misconduct and obstructing governmental administration in the second degree — both



Nicholas Lemma, ex-detective

criminal misdemeanors.

The former First Squad detective could not be reached, but Lemma's lawyer, Mitchell Garber of Manhattan, said:

"Mr. Lemma denies any criminal responsibility in this matter and looks forward to the opportunity to clear his name."

The arrest was a product of the appointment of a special prosecutor at the request of Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice. She opted not to investigate because allegations also had been made against members of her staff who had been serving under her predecessor, Denis Dillon.

She was prompted in her request last year by Hempstead lawyer Fred Brewington's charges of official malfeasance against his client in the 2005 case. Brewington got his client, Raheem Crews, now 24 and of

Queens, out of jail after he served four months on the wrongful charge of an armed robbery in Roosevelt. He now represents him in a multimillion civil suit against Nassau.

The special prosecutor is Brooklyn DA Charles Hynes, and the Jan. 7 arrest of Lemma was the result of an investigation by his office. But a Hynes spokesman, Jerry Schmetterer, said this week he would not comment on an open case.

In October, Newsday reported that a county police spokesman said an officer he would not name had been investigated in the Crews case and had resigned. Other informed sources, on condition of anonymity,

said Lemma was the officer.

Lemma, a 23-year veteran, was named Police Officer of the Month while at the Eighth Precinct in March 1998.

Brewington brought his charges to Rice after Lemma, in a February 2009 deposition for the civil suit, said he learned that Crews could not have committed the robbery, but "I kept it to myself and said, 'Let the chips fall where they may.'"

Brewington said he is unhappy the investigation resulted only in charges against Lemma.

Brewington said: "I can't understand why others were not charged, and why we were not notified about the arrest."

With Matthew Chayes