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RACING CHARGES UPGRADED

Charges against four drivers police said were racing at more than 100 mph on the Long Island Expressway in October have been upgraded from misdemeanors to felonies, Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice said yesterday.

One of the cars involved, a 2001 BMW, had a license plate that read: "HEYOFFCR."

The incident took place at about 1:30 a.m. Oct. 1 and involved six cars, according to Nassau police. The chase began near Exit 48 on the Nassau-Suffolk border and ended near Exit 37 in Roslyn, where police managed to stop four of the cars.

Two others fled. The arrested drivers, identified by police as Anil Isaac, 22, of Richmond Hill; Rajesh Prashaud, 21, of South Ozone Park, and brothers Ziad Mohamed, 21, and Riad Mohamed, 19, of South Ozone Park, had the charges against them upgraded in an indictment returned by a Nassau grand jury yesterday.

According to Rice, the four face charges of first-degree and second-degree reckless endangerment, as well as third-degree unlawful fleeing of a police officer and "numerous traffic and equipment violations." The four now face a maximum of seven years in prison if convicted.

"Driving like this on the Long Island Expressway is essentially vehicular Russian roulette," Rice said in a statement.

The attorney for Riad and Ziad Mohamed, James Kousouros of Kew Gardens, said to be convicted in felony reckless endangerment cases, defendants must be found to have exhibited "depraved indifference" to human life. "It is our position that the conduct that is being alleged in this case does not by any standard rise to the standards of reckless endangerment in the first degree," he said.

Prashaud's attorney, Anthony Martone of Kew Gardens, said he was "very confident" Prashaud would be exonerated.

Isaac's attorney, Edward Gallison, could not be reached for comment.

Staff writer Carl MacGowan contributed to this story.