



# Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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Docket #: 2:08-CR-237 EJJ

## GUILTY PLEA IN HOAX BOMB THREAT TO DELTA AIRLINES

SACRAMENTO: United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that APUN MAHAPATRA, 31, of Sacramento, pleaded guilty today before Senior District Court Judge Edward J. Garcia to making a hoax bomb threat to Delta Airlines.

This case is the product of extensive investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Benjamin Wagner and Daniel McConkie, who are prosecuting the case, MAHAPATRA admitted that on May 1, 2008 he accessed the Delta Airlines website via the Internet from his home in Sacramento, and signed into a live chat session with a Delta Airlines operator employee. In response to a message from the Delta employee asking "How may I assist you?", MAHAPATRA typed a message indicating that a flight scheduled to leave Mumbai International Airport for Atlanta on May 2 should be cancelled because there would be a "Hijack and Bomblast." [sic] At the time he sent the message to Delta, MAHAPATRA knew that it was already early on Friday, May 2, in Mumbai, and that there was a Delta Airlines commercial jetliner scheduled to depart Mumbai for New York and Atlanta on that date.

MAHAPATRA made the hoax threat because he had recently returned from India where he had been involved in a domestic dispute with his wife, and he believed that she may have been traveling on that flight and he intended to cause her significant disruption and anxiety. As a result of the threat, Delta offloaded all of its cargo from the plane, at a cost of over \$35,000; all passengers' carry-on baggage was screened at the gate; enhanced physical security measures were taken on the aircraft; the flight was delayed about an hour in departing Mumbai; and airport security officials in Mumbai were notified and took additional security measures. The passengers were not informed of the threat.

MAHAPATRA is scheduled to be sentenced on July 31, 2009, before Judge Garcia. He faces a maximum punishment of up to five years imprisonment and a \$250,000. However, the actual sentence

will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

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