

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Ralph J. Marra, Jr., Acting U.S. Attorney

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Contact:

Michael Drewniak, Public Affairs Officer
973-645-2888

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 7, 2009

Charter Flights Director of Defunct Private Jet Company Admits Using Unqualified Pilots

– Flights Included Jet that Crashed at Teterboro in 2005 –

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

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NEWARK – The director of charters of a now-defunct luxury charter jet company who booked and dispatched a flight from Teterboro Airport which crashed on takeoff in 2005 pleaded guilty today to a conspiracy to defraud charter customers and brokers and to impede and obstruct the Federal Aviation Administration, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr. announced.

Joseph Singh, 37, of Boca Raton, Fla., admitted during his guilty plea before U.S. District Judge Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr., that he dispatched unqualified or unrested pilots – including the pilot of the jet that crashed at Teterboro on Feb. 2, 2005 – to fly charter customers for Platinum Jet Management of Fort Lauderdale.

Singh pleaded guilty to the lead count of a 23-count Indictment, charging him with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and to defraud the United States (the FAA), according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott B. McBride. Following the guilty plea, Judge Greenaway scheduled sentencing for Oct. 26.

The defendant faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of the greatest of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss caused by his offense. In addition, Judge Greenaway must order that Singh pay restitution to the victims of his offense.

During the plea hearing today, Singh admitted that he was the “director of charters” for Platinum Jet from November 2003 until shortly after the Teterboro crash. As the director of charters, Singh stated, he booked charter flights for Platinum Jet using charter brokers and dispatched Platinum Jet pilots to fly those flights. According to Singh, he dispatched unqualified pilots to fly a number of those flights, while representing to the charter brokers through wire communications that Platinum would operate in compliance with federal law.

According to Singh, he dispatched John Kimberling, who was not commercially qualified, to fly the ill-fated flight from Teterboro to Chicago. The plane crashed into a warehouse after failing to lift off. Singh admitted that he knew Kimberling was not qualified to fly that flight, and he further admitted to dispatching Kimberling on other flights.

Singh has five co-defendants, including Michael and Paul Brassington, Andre Budhan, Brien McKenzie, and Francis Vieira. Budhan pleaded guilty on June 22 before Judge Greenaway to the same conspiracy count as Singh. The remaining four defendants have pleaded not guilty to the charges and are scheduled for trial before Judge Greenaway on Jan. 19.

In determining Singh’s actual sentence, Judge Greenaway will consult the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that

take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The Judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Marra credited Special Agents of the Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General, under the direction of Inspector General Calvin L. Scovel III and Special Agent in Charge Ned E. Schwartz, for the successful prosecution.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott B. McBride of the U.S. Attorney's Government Fraud Unit.

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Defense Counsel:
Mark A. Douglas, Esq., Miami, Fla.