

NEWS

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Convenience Store Owner Arrested for
Attempting to Bribe a Consular Official

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Wall Township convenience store owner was arrested today on a one-count criminal Complaint for his alleged attempt to pay \$40,000 to a U.S. Department of State employee, in exchange for a multiple entry visa for a citizen of India, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The complaint, which was issued under seal on Jan. 22, 2007, alleges that from September 2006 to January 2007, Jiguveshkumar G. Patel, 26, of Belmar, a.k.a. “Jay,” a naturalized U.S. citizen who was born in India, corruptly offered and promised a thing of value, that is \$40,000, to a public official with the intent to influence an official act and to influence a public official to commit or aid in the committing of a fraud against the United States, in violation of the official’s lawful duty.

The complaint was unsealed following the defendant’s arrest this morning by Special Agents with the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security at the defendant’s convenience store located in Wall Township. Patel made an initial appearance today before U.S. Magistrate Ann Marie Donio, who released the defendant on a \$50,000 bond secured by property.

The complaint alleges that Patel sought to obtain a visa for the son of his business partner. According to the complaint, the son, who is a citizen of India, was unable to obtain a visa to travel to the United States.

Patel, according to the complaint, became aware that the daughter of a patron worked for “Immigration.” Patel approached the patron and offered to pay the individual’s daughter, initially \$20,000 and later \$40,000, for a visa to get his partner’s son out India and into the U.S.

Citizens of India who wish to visit the United States must apply for a visa through the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General, which represent the U.S. Department of State in foreign countries.

Patel told an undercover agent, who was posing as the patron’s daughter, that the son was interested in a “multiple visa,” according to the complaint. A multiple entry visa allows the holder of the visa to depart and re-enter the United States on multiple occasions without having to apply for a new visa on each occasion.

The bribery charge carries a maximum statutory sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

In determining an actual sentence, the judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the advisory U.S. 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.

Despite the charge set forth in the complaint, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

Christie credited Special Agents of the U.S. State Department, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher Paul, in the New York Field Office, Troopers with the N.J. State Police, under the direction of Colonel Joseph R. Fuentes, Superintendent, and Police Officers the Wall Township Police Department, under the direction of Chief David Morris, with the investigation leading to the criminal complaint.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jason M. Richardson of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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