

Department of Justice

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Western District of New York

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MAN PLED GUILTY TO ROLE IN MARIJUANA SMUGGLING

N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Raj Clare, age 30, of Canada pled guilty before United States District Judge Richard J. Arcara to his role in smuggling marijuana from Canada into the United States by the use of tractor-trailers. Raj Clare admitted to the felony offenses of conspiracy to import 50 kilograms or more of marijuana and failure to appear in court. Clare faces a maximum sentence of 20 years and a fine of \$1 million, or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Melissa Meetze, who handled the case, stated the defendant was charged with the drug offense in 2005 but fled to Canada to evade criminal prosecution. He was returned to the United States in June 2011 after the United States Attorney's Office initiated extradition proceedings against him. As a result, Clare faces the additional charge of failing to appear in court.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Special Agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge, James C. Spero .

Sentencing is scheduled for December 15, 2011, at 1:00 p.m. EST, in Buffalo, N.Y., before Judge Arcara.