

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
OCTOBER 5, 2011  
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## **FOUR HOTEL OPERATORS ARRESTED FOR FILING FALSE HOMELAND SECURITY DOCUMENTS**

BUFFALO, N.Y.--U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that four non-citizens were charged in two separate Criminal Complaints in connection with the filing of false and fraudulent documents with the Department of Homeland Security. The filings related to the defendants' ability to enter and remain in the United States.

Pankajkumar Patel, 38, a native and citizen of India, currently residing in Geneva, New York, who operates the Americas Best Value Inn in Geneva, and Hareshkumar Patel, 41, a native of India with Canadian citizenship, currently living in Tonawanda, New York, who operates the Red Carpet Inn, in Tonawanda, were charged with making false oral and written statements to the Department of Homeland Security, aggravated identity theft, and making false statements under oath in proceedings related to immigration status. The false statement charges carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both. The aggravated identity theft charge carries a mandatory penalty of two years in prison consecutive to another prison term, a fine of \$250,000 or both.

Mahesh Ambu, 51, and his wife, Joytiben Ambu, 50, both natives of Tanzania with British citizenship, currently living in West Seneca, New York, and who own and operate the Orchard Park Inn, located in West Seneca, together were charged in a separate Criminal Complaint with conspiring to unlawfully obtain their naturalization, making false oral and written statements the Department of Homeland Security, and making false statements under oath in proceedings related to immigration status. The charges carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John E. Rogowski, who is handling the cases, stated that according to the Criminal Complaint, the Patels filed applications under company names, using the identity of an unwitting third party, with the United States Department of Labor, seeking to have a fictitious job classified as a "speciality occupation." They each then filed visa applications to enter the United States claiming that they would perform the "specialty occupations" while in fact they worked at motels.

According to the Criminal Complaint against the Ambu's, each filed applications for naturalization in which they claimed to have resided in the United States beginning in 2003 when, in fact, they had illegally resided in Florida, Oklahoma and New York, beginning in at least 1995.

The Criminal Complaints are the result of an investigation on the part of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge James C. Spero.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.