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ST. JOHN'S STUDENT ACCUSED OF PHONING IN BOMB THREAT TO SCHOOL

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a 20-year-old student at St. John's University has been charged with phoning in a threat yesterday to bomb the school.

District Attorney Brown said, "As recent events have so tragically illustrated, situations of this nature can escalate and turn violent and deadly. Fortunately that did not turn out to be the case here as those on campus maintained a level of calmness that resulted in no panic or injuries during the crisis. The New York City Police Department also deserves to be praised for its handling of this potentially dangerous situation in a professional and efficient manner, greatly minimizing disruption and maintaining public safety and order."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Raaz J. Patel, 20, of 91-15 222nd Street in Queens Village. He is presently being held pending arraignment in Queens Criminal Court on charges of first-, second- and third-degree falsely reporting an incident, second-degree reckless endangerment and second-degree aggravated harassment. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, Patel called St. John's University's Department of Public Safety anonymously at approximately 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 3, 2008, and stated that a bomb would be detonated on the school campus. It is further alleged that at approximately 3:00 p.m. a school professor discovered a handwritten note taped to a monitor in a lecture hall which stated that bombs would be blown up at the school and that the informant had been taken care of. In the meantime, it is alleged that police were able to trace the phone call back to Patel's residence.

At the time of his arrest, Patel allegedly admitted that he had placed the phone call to St. John's about a bomb going off and that it wasn't true. It is alleged that Patel further admitted that he wrote the note taped to the monitor, that it was all a lie and that he did it because he was angry at the school.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Jerome Ranjitsingh and other detectives assigned to the New York City Police Department's 107th Precinct detective squad.

The case is being prosecuted by the District Attorney's Major Crimes Bureau.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted on www.queensda.org