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Boro student charged in St. John's bomb threat

20-yr.-old from Queens Village arrested after making anonymous call to campus: DA Brown

BY ALEX CHRISTODOULIDES

St. John's University's emergency alert system got its second trial of the academic year last Thursday after the school received a bomb threat and a 20-year-old Queens Village student was charged in connection with the incident.

Police said a student who had previously been disciplined was arrested April 4 on a list of charges.

The Queens district attorney's office announced Friday the arraignment of Raaz Patel, 20, of 222nd Street in Queens Village, on charges of falsely reporting an incident, reckless endangerment and aggravated harassment, and noted that Patel faces up to seven years in prison if convicted. The DA's office said Patel posted bail and is due back in court April 18, and that he did not have a criminal record in Queens.

The school sent an alert via e-mail and phone messages to students, staff and faculty last Thursday saying an anonymous caller had made a threat that a bomb would be detonated at a building on the Queens campus.

"A threat was made, the university community was alerted by internal communication and an arrest has since been made through the NYPD," said a St. John's spokeswoman.

She stressed that the text message option for alerts is only used in imminent danger, and the school thought this situation merited only e-mail and telephone alerts.

According to the criminal complaint filed with the DA's office, Patel anonymously called the university's Public Safety Department at about 10 a.m. last Thursday and said a bomb would be detonated on the school campus. At about 3 p.m.,



A disgruntled student phoned in a bomb threat to the Queens campus of St. John's University last week, leading to one arrest, according to police.

a professor discovered a handwritten note taped to a monitor in a lecture hall stating that bombs would be blown up at the school and that the informant had been taken care of, the complaint said. Police traced the call back to Patel's home, the DA said.

When he was arrested, Patel admitted he had made the telephone threat

and that it was not true, the DA said. Patel also admitted he had written the note found on the monitor, that it was a lie and he had done it because he was angry at the school, the DA said.

The school implemented the emergency alert system in September under which the campus community could sign up

for e-mail, telephone or text message bulletins. Initially, about 2,100 students signed up for the program.

The first test occurred in September, when a 23-year-old freshman entered the Queens campus wearing a rubber mask and carrying a black powder rifle and was apprehended minutes later by a campus se-

curity officer and a member of the school's NYPD cadet program. Within a week of the incident, enrollment in the alert program quadrupled.

By last Thursday, enrollment in the program had risen to approximately 20,000 users, including St. John's faculty, staff and students.

"We are working with the NYPD and experts to assess the threat and we will advise the university community on appropriate safety precautions as we evaluate the threat," the e-mail said. "Please stay connected to standard university communication channels including the Web, e-mail and text messages for instructions. We ask that you continue to assist the Public Safety Office by alerting us to any unusual packages, behaviors and communications that you may witness."