

Image not found or type unknown

Three Indian Nationals Who Allegedly Attempted Illegal Entry Into U.S. at St. Croix Airport Arrested

Crime / **Published On December 06, 2021 05:28 AM /**

Staff Consortium **December 06, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



U.S. Customs and Border Protection field operation vehicle at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Three Indian nationals who allegedly attempted illegal entry into the U.S. through the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix have been detained by federal law enforcement, U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands, Gretchen Shappert has announced.

They appeared before Magistrate Court Judge George W. Cannon, Jr. for a preliminary hearing on Dec. 2 to face criminal charges. Probable cause was found and the defendants were bound over to the District Court for further proceedings.

According to court documents, on November 24, 2021, at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix, Krishnaben Patel, age 25, Nikunj Kumar Patel, age 27, and Ashok Kumar Patel, age 39, presented themselves to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officers for inspection to board Spirit Airlines Flight #449 from St. Croix to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. A systems check revealed that their Florida driver's licenses were not legally issued and were deemed fraudulent. Further inspection revealed that in August 2019, the three were previously detained by CBP in Tecate, California, and were processed for expedited removal. They were subsequently removed from the United States to India.

As a result, the Patels were charged by criminal complaint with Reentry by an Alien After Removal and Possession and Use of Fraudulent Documents. If convicted, the Patels face a up to a potential 10 years in prison and subsequent deportation. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations are investigating the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel H. Huston is prosecuting the case.

United States Attorney Shappert reminds the public that a complaint is merely a formal charging document and is not evidence of guilt. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty.