



## **USA: uomo condannato a pagare mezzo milione di dollari per chiamate di falsi soccorsi sul lago Erie**

Sandusky man sentenced to three months custody, ordered to pay \$489,007 for false distress calls that caused lake Erie search

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 19, 2013 - A Sandusky man was sentenced to three months in federal custody and ordered to pay \$489,007 in restitution after for making a false distress call that caused a massive search on Lake Erie, said Steven M. Dettelbach, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

Danik Shiv Kumar, 21, pleaded guilty earlier this year to one count of making a false distress calls.

On the evening of March 14, 2012, Kumar took off in a Cessna single-engine plane for a solo flight from Burke Lakefront Airport to Bowling Green State University. About 30 minutes into his flight, Kumar called the Cleveland-Hopkins Airport control tower and reported seeing a vessel "launching up flares," according to court documents.

Moments later, when asked for additional details about the vessel in distress, Kumar responded "a 25-foot fishing vessel I guess you could say. Everyone had a life jacket with a strobe light. I counted four of them," according to court documents.

The information was relayed to the Coast Guard, which immediately dispatched two vessels. The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Thunder Bay searched for 21 hours, while multiple boat crews from Coast Guard Station Lorain, Ohio, searched for about 16 hours. Rescue helicopter crews from Coast Guard Air Station Detroit joined in the search, as did a Canadian Coast Guard airplane crew from Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Trenton, Ontario, according to court documents.

More than a month later, Kumar admitted that he never saw flares or a boat in distress and there were never any people in need of help. He also admitted that when he landed at Bowling Green, he knew the USCG was searching with full force but chose not to report the truth, according to court documents.

The \$489,007 restitution amount represents the cost of the search. The amount is comprised of the \$277,257 expended by U.S. agencies and the \$211,750 cost to the Canadian government. Kumar was also sentenced to 250 hours of community service and three years of supervised release.

"I am concerned that there are people who are willing to risk the lives of other boaters who might be in legitimate need of rescue or assistance, as well as needlessly endanger response crews, by knowingly making a false distress calls," said Capt. Eric Johnson, chief of the Coast Guard 9th District Incident Management Branch.

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This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Baeppler and Coast Guard Lt. Michael Petta, who was designated Special Assistant United States Attorney. The case was investigated by the United States Coast Guard.