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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LAW & PUBLIC SAFETY

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**NEW YORK MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CALLING IN FALSE
REPORT OF GUNMEN AT TURNPIKE REST STOP**

TRENTON – Attorney General Paula T. Dow, Criminal Justice Director Stephen J. Taylor and Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, announced that a New York man pleaded guilty today to making a false 911 call last year in which he reported that three gunmen exited a van at a rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike. The call caused the State Police to stop the van, which was transporting students from Queens, N.Y.

According to Director Taylor, Rodney A. Tanzymore, 20, of St. Albans (Queens), N.Y., pleaded guilty before Superior Court Judge Robert Billmeier in Mercer County to a third-degree charge of causing a false public alarm. Because he has no prior felony convictions, Tanzymore faces a term of probation of three to five years, rather than a prison sentence. The state will recommend that he be sentenced to 90 days in jail as a condition of the probation. Judge Billmeier scheduled sentencing for Tanzymore for Sept. 30. Deputy Attorney General Mark Eliades, Chief of the Division of Criminal Justice Gangs & Organized Crime Bureau, took the guilty plea.

On Nov. 21, 2009, Tanzymore was part of a group of students who were traveling home with their chaperones after a trip to a Washington, D.C., university. In pleading guilty, Tanzymore admitted that during the trip, he phoned 911 and described three members of the student group, falsely reporting that they got out of a van at the Woodrow Wilson service plaza on the Turnpike with handguns. He described the Mercedes passenger van with tinted windows in which the group was traveling, and gave a partial license plate for the vehicle. Tanzymore made the call from a cell phone while he was at the service area during a stop for food.

The call prompted a high-risk response by numerous troopers who located the van and evacuated the 15 occupants at the side of the Turnpike in Hamilton, Mercer County. Tanzymore gave troopers a false name and date of birth at that time. The group was placed back in the van when the search turned up no weapons. When a person involved with the group publicly questioned the credibility of the report, the State Police released audio of the 911 call and video from in-car cameras to show the critical nature of the incident and the professional response by the troopers.

Detective Sgt. Ray Smink and Detective Ken Hoppe were primary investigators for the State Police. Tanzymore was located by the New Jersey State Police Fugitive Unit, assisted by the U.S. Marshals Task Force. He was initially charged on Feb. 22 and detained by the New York Police Department until his extradition to New Jersey.

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