

ESSEX COUNTY PROSECUTORS OFFICE PRESS RELEASE



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Subject: **FBI Seeks the Public's Assistance with Identifying Individuals Who Aim Lasers at Aircraft *Up to \$10,000.00 Reward Being Offered***

Date: **June 03,2014**

Category: **Other**

Defendant(s):

Today, the FBI announced a national campaign to deter people from pointing lasers at aircraft, a federal violation that presents danger to pilots, passengers and those on the ground. The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for information that leads to the arrest of any individual who aims a laser at an aircraft. The reward is available for 90 days in all 56 FBI field offices throughout the country.

In 2005, the FBI partnered with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to address the increasing problem of laser strikes on airplanes. The problem was growing across the country, as more powerful lasers became easier to purchase. From 2005 through 2013, the deliberate targeting of aircraft by handheld lasers increased by more than 1,100 percent. These incidents often result in pilots experiencing temporary blindness, which can force them to divert or make emergency landings.

This dramatic increase in reported laser strikes prompted the FBI to create a pilot program aimed at raising awareness on the dangers of pointing a laser at an aircraft, and the offering of a monetary reward for information that leads to an arrest. Twelve FBI field offices throughout the country participated in this media campaign. Since the launch of the pilot program on February 11, 2014, the major metropolitan areas of the 12 FBI offices participating in this program have seen a 19-percent decrease in the number of reported incidents. Laser incidents on aircraft arriving and departing from Newark Liberty Airport have increased 14% over the past year.

"Although our previous efforts to raise public awareness have shown early signs of success in reducing the number of laser attacks in those 12 cities, the laser threat remains a problem on a much larger scale," said Joseph Campbell, Assistant Director of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. "We hope to build on our success through this national campaign in an effort to reduce the overall threat."

The FBI is partnering with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Air Line Pilots Association International, federal, state and local law enforcement, international law enforcement, school resource officers and other stakeholders in its efforts to continue to educate the public about the dangers associated with laser strikes to aircraft. Campaign outreach efforts include digital billboards, radio public service announcements, video, social media, a presence on www.fbi.gov and partner websites and more.

"I can't stress enough how dangerous and irresponsible it is to point a laser at an aircraft," said

FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. “We know that targeted enforcement has succeeded in driving down laser incidents in a number of cities, and we’ll continue to partner with law enforcement to address this problem nationwide.”

“Intentionally aiming a laser at an aircraft poses a serious threat to those in the air and on the ground – and it’s a serious crime with serious consequences”, said Air Line Pilots Association, International President, Captain Lee Moak. “The Laser Threat Awareness Campaign has resulted in an overall reduction of incidents, and we look forward to continuing to work with the FBI to bring the reach of these efforts.”

Thousands of laser attacks go unreported every year, including strikes against law enforcement aircraft, media helicopters, military aircraft, medical evacuation and search and rescue aircraft, as well as foreign air carriers. If you have information about a lasing incident, or see someone pointing a laser at an aircraft, call your local FBI field office or dial 911.

FBI Newark Special Agent in Charge Aaron T. Ford would like to thank the Federal Air Marshal Service, the New Jersey State Police, the Atlantic County Prosecutor’s Office, the Bergen County Prosecutor’s Office, the Cape May County Prosecutor’s Office, Essex County Prosecutor’s Office, Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office, Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office, Ocean County Prosecutor’s Office, and the Union County Prosecutor’s Office, and the Ocean City New Jersey Police Department for their significant contributions to this public awareness campaign.

Essex County Prosecutor's Office Newark, NJ