LASERS HIT 20 AIRCRAFT FLYING IN U.S. OVERNIGHT: FAA

News / Airlines

Dangerous beams from handheld lasers struck 20 aircraft flying over the United States and its territories overnight, among the nearly 5,400 laser hits in the nation so far this year, the Federal Aviation Administration said on Thursday.

No injuries were reported in the incidents, which took place from New York City to Sacramento, and resulted in at least one arrest. Authorities said the incidents did not appear to be linked to each other.

"Shining a laser at an aircraft is a federal crime," the FAA said in a statement.

Laser beams can lead to temporary blindness in pilots and, in some cases, pilots have reported eye injuries that required medical treatment.

As of Oct. 16, the total number of laser strikes around the U.S. this year was 5,352, the FAA said.

One man was arrested in New York after a Channel 4 news helicopter was struck by a laser beam while flying near the Barclays Center arena in Brooklyn at 5:15 p.m. ET (10:15 p.m. GMT) on Wednesday. The pilot alerted LaGuardia Airport's air traffic control tower staff, which notified a New York Police Department aviation unit.

Police in the air worked with their colleagues on the ground to track the suspect to the rear of a building near downtown Brooklyn, where he was taken into custody, the NYPD said.

Ossieo Silva, 20, was charged with felony and misdemeanor counts of reckless endangerment.

Authorities did not immediately respond to a Reuters query as to whether he also was charged

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with a federal crime.

At Love Field in Dallas on Wednesday night, three planes preparing to land reported being hit by a laser beam as they flew at between 3,000 and 4,000 feet, a Federal Aviation Administration official said.

No one was arrested, and there was no harm to the Southwest Airlines and Virgin America planes and a private jet.

"Unauthorized laser illumination event (inaudible) miles southeast of Dallas Love airport, 4,000 feet. Green laser" an air traffic controller said in a recording played on TV station WFAA.

The FAA said laser strikes were reported overnight by other aircraft in New York, Salt Lake City, Detroit, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Sacramento, Newark, New Jersey; Jamestown, New York; Oakland, California; Covington, Kentucky; Danville, Kentucky; Palm Springs, California; Ontario, California; St. Petersburg, Florida; Springfield, Illinois and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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