



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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ROSEVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO “LASERING” POLICE HELICOPTER

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that BALTAZAR VALLADARES, 30, of Roseville, pleaded guilty today before United States District Judge William B. Shubb to interference with the safe operation of an aircraft.

This case is the product of a joint investigation by the Federal Air Marshals, the FBI, the Sacramento Sheriff's Department, the Roseville Police Department, and the Sacramento Police Department

According to Assistant United States Attorney Matthew D. Segal, who is prosecuting the case, VALLADARES pleaded guilty to shining a laser at STAR 5, a Sacramento Sheriff's Department helicopter. STAR 5 was in the area of VALLADARES's residence investigating an earlier incident involving the lasering of a passenger airliner that had been on approach to Sacramento International Airport. VALLADARES, who had been drinking, shined a laser at the helicopter and then ran inside his residence. Investigating officers on the ground arrested him and found his laser.

Authorities have recognized that the lasering of aircraft is an increasingly serious problem and are formulating strategies to investigate and prosecute more offenders. The focused beams of a laser remain powerful even at a long distance, and even brief exposure to a laser beam can cause discomfort and temporary visual impairments, such as glare, flash blindness, and afterimages. Such impairments can have very grave consequences for pilots and for the safety of their aircraft in flight.

“Shining a laser at an aircraft is both dangerous and reckless. It is a serious violation of federal law and will be treated accordingly,” stated Acting U.S. Attorney Brown.

VALLADARES is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Shubb on August 17, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. The maximum statutory penalty for interference with the safe operation of an aircraft is 20 years in prison. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

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