



# Department of Justice

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## **DISRUPTIVE AIRPLANE PASSENGER FOUND GUILTY OF ASSAULT/INTIMIDATION**

Orlando, Florida - U.S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that a federal jury yesterday found Sammy Fontanez-Mercado (age 26, of Spring Hill) guilty of assaulting or intimidating a flight crew. Fontanez-Mercado faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for August 5, 2009.

According to court documents, Fontanez-Mercado was a passenger on a flight to Orlando International Airport. He disobeyed instructions to remain seated after the aircraft landed and was approached by a flight attendant. Fontanez-Mercado became confrontational and verbally abusive. He then lunged at the flight attendant and had to be physically restrained. Another passenger traveling with Fontanez-Mercado, Luis Rodriguez, also struck a flight attendant in the face and had to be restrained. The flight attendants sustained bite wounds, bruises and lacerations. Rodriguez previously pleaded guilty to related charges.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Dan Eckhart.

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