

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Contact:
Michael Drewniak, Public Affairs Office
973-645-2888

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 17, 2008

Priest Indicted for Fondling 16-Year-Old Aboard Newark-Bound Jetliner

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

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NEWARK – A priest traveling from Poland to the United States on July 5 was indicted today on a charge of abusive sexual contact for allegedly fondling a 16-year-old girl aboard a flight to Newark Liberty International Airport, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Tomasz Adam Zielinski, 31, a Polish national in the U.S. on a religious visa, surrendered to Special Agents of the FBI last Friday, following an investigation of events on the aircraft that arrived in Newark on July 5.

Zielinski, who is associated with a church in Manville, is charged with one count of abusive sexual contact aboard an aircraft bound for the United States. The charge carries a maximum statutory penalty of two years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Zielinski appeared in federal court on July 11 and was released by a federal magistrate judge on a \$10,000 bond and ordered to have no contact with minors.

According to the initial criminal Complaint, which charged simple assault, Zielinski was seated next to the girl when he began touching her inappropriately. The girl responded by asking the flight crew to change her seat and was accommodated. Later in the flight, Zielinski allegedly approached her again, apologized and asked for forgiveness. The flight crew directed Zielinski back to his seat. The plane, en route from Warsaw, Poland, landed in Newark at approximately 9 p.m. on July 5.

Zielinski will next be required to appear for arraignment on the Indictment. The case must be assigned to a U.S. District Judge who will set a date for that arraignment.

An Indictment is merely an accusation. Despite indictment, all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI in Newark, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation of Zielinski.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney L. Judson Welle in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Chester Keller, Esq., Federal Public Defender's Office, Newark