



## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Distribution

March 25, 2013

**André Birotte Jr.**

United States Attorney  
Central District of California

---

Thom Mrozek, Public Affairs Officer  
(213) 894-6947  
[thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov](mailto:thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov)  
[www.justice.gov/usao/cac](http://www.justice.gov/usao/cac)

### **North Hollywood Man Who Aimed Laser at Aircraft in Violation of 2012 Federal Law Sentenced to 30 Months in Prison**

LOS ANGELES – A federal judge who said the prison term should serve as a message to other would-be defendants today sentenced a North Hollywood man to 30 months in federal prison for aiming a laser beam at a plane and a police helicopter.

Adam Gardenhire, 19, was sentenced by United States District Judge Stephen V. Wilson.

In imposing the prison sentence, Judge Wilson rejected Gardenhire's arguments that aiming a laser at an aircraft in flight was not really very dangerous and determined that, by deliberately targeting the aircraft with his laser, Gardenhire had recklessly endangered the safety of the aircraft.

Gardenhire pleaded guilty in October 2012 to one count of aiming the beam of a laser at aircraft. Gardenhire was arrested in April 2012 after being indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of aiming a laser pointer at a private plane and a helicopter operated by the Pasadena Police Department.

The federal statute used to charge Gardenhire is part of legislation signed into law in 2012 by President Obama making it a federal crime to deliberately aim a laser at an aircraft. The indictment of Gardenhire marked only the second time the new statute had been used in the United States.

According to court documents, Gardenhire deliberately aimed a commercial-grade green laser at multiple aircraft on the evening of March 29, 2012. The laser attack was initially reported by a pilot operating a privately owned Cessna

Citation as the pilot was preparing to land at Burbank Airport. The laser struck the pilot in the eye multiple times and caused him to suffer vision impairment that lasted for hours.

Later that evening, Gardenhire aimed his laser at a police helicopter several times. The helicopter was operated by a pilot with the Pasadena Police Department, who was responding to the report of the laser attack on the Cessna. The helicopter pilot was wearing protective gear and did not suffer eye damage or vision impairment as a result of the laser.

Air and ground investigators with the Los Angeles Police Department, the Burbank Police Department, the Pasadena Police Department and the Burbank Airport Police Department identified Gardenhire as a suspect later that evening.

The investigation into Gardenhire was conducted by the Los Angeles Police Department, the Pasadena Police Department, the Burbank Police Department, the Burbank Airport Police Department, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Reports of laser attacks have increased dramatically in recent years as strong laser devices have become more affordable and widely available to the public. Technology has advanced the effectiveness of laser devices and has increased potential safety hazards for pilots operating aircraft, as well as their passengers and crew. Hazards to pilots include distraction and impaired vision, both of which are particularly dangerous during the critical takeoff and landing phases of flight. In some cases, pilots have reported the need to abort landings or relinquish control of the aircraft to another pilot as a result of laser attacks. California consistently leads the nation in reports of laser attacks on aircraft, with more than 500 of the nearly 3,500 nationwide laser attacks reported in 2012.

CONTACT: Assistant United States Attorney Melissa Mills  
National Security Section  
(213) 894-0627