

Suspect Detained in Laser Attacks on Rostov Jets

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A suspect has been detained on suspicion of blinding pilots of passenger airplanes with laser beams near the Rostov-on-Don airport, police spokesman Alexei Polyansky said Monday.

Polyansky did not identify the suspect, but Interfax said he was 22 and had denied blinding anyone. He was released shortly after his detention Sunday, and the case remains under investigation, Interfax said.

The police received a tip from residents who saw the man shining a laser beam toward the Rostov-on-Don airport, the report said.

Five laser attacks, one of which targeted a police helicopter, have been registered in Rostov-on-Don this month, with the last two occurring Thursday night, Polyansky said by telephone.

Polyansky said punishment in these types of cases depended on the motive. He could not say exactly what kind of punishment would await anyone who blinded pilots on purpose, adding that a court would have to decide that.

Since January, the number of registered incidents across Russia has reached 45, compared with the five reports in 2010, Federal Air Transportation Agency spokesman Sergei Izvolsky said by telephone.

Most of the incidents occurred in Rostov-on-Don and Moscow's Sheremetyevo and Vnukovo airports.

Though none of the reported incidents ended badly, the growing trend of laser beam attacks, which are familiar to the airports in the United States and Europe, has been a growing concern for the Federal Air Transportation Agency.

Shining a laser beam at an airplane may seriously disorient and distract pilots, jeopardizing the safety of the passengers on board, Izvolsky said.

Special glasses that automatically darken when exposed to bright light could help prevent pilots from being blinded, RIA-Novosti reported, citing experts ([link](#)).

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