

Aeroflot Jet Nearly Crashes After Laser Attack

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An Aeroflot plane with 128 people on board nearly crashed while landing in Barnaul last week after a 15-year-old boy directed a laser pointer at the cockpit, news reports said Friday.

The boy targeted the A-320 plane carrying 120 passengers and eight crew members as it was landing in the airport of the Altai republic's capital around 6 a.m. Thursday, Interfax reported, citing regional police.

The boy could not sleep and entertained himself with the laser pointer, which he directed at the plane from the window of his room, news site Altapress.ru reported.

Laser attacks can cause short-term vision loss.

The pilot of the plane, which was arriving from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport, told police that he barely averted a crash and that the laser's ray had remained in the cockpit almost until the plane touched down, Altapress.ru said.

Aeroflot had no immediate comment about the incident.

The unidentified boy told police that he "had not planned to blind the pilot and had only directed the beam at the flashing lights of the airplane."

The parents of the boy will be fined about 500 rubles (\$15) for negligence, the news reports said.

About 50 laser attacks on planes have been reported so far this year, causing the State Duma to consider legislation making the attacks a crime punishable by seven to 10 years in prison.

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