

Omaha man convicted of aiming laser pointer at aircraft



An Omaha man was found guilty Wednesday in federal court of using a laser pointer to distract pilots and could be sentenced to five years in prison.

U.S. District Court Judge John Gerrard found Michael A. Smith, 30, guilty of aiming a laser at aircraft and will sentence him on July 22.

Smith, who could also be fined up to \$250,000, was arrested July 11, 2012, after a Southwest Airlines pilot reported that someone in northwest Omaha had used a laser to temporarily blind him. The Omaha police helicopter responded and was distracted by a laser while heading in the direction that the airline pilot had reported.

The helicopter hovered in the vicinity and directed deputies from the Douglas County Sheriff's Office to the home where the laser originated.

A sheriff's deputy reported that Smith was still aiming the laser pointer in the direction of the helicopter when he walked into the man's backyard near 152nd Street and Nebraska Avenue.

<http://www.omaha.com/article/20130425/NEWS/704259855/1016>