



# ILLINOIS STATE POLICE

## NEWS RELEASE

Brendan F. Kelly - Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ILLINOIS STATE POLICE MAKES ARREST IN CONNECTION WITH AIRCRAFT BEING TARGETED WITH A LASER POINTER**

**CHICAGO** – On June 22, 2023, the Illinois State Police (ISP) arrested 36-year-old Saul Martinez Castanon of Berkeley, Illinois, who is suspected of pointing a laser pointer at aircraft flying overhead. These laser pointers have been a national issue for aviators for several years. When pointed into an aircraft cockpit, the light can temporarily blind pilots as they navigate busy airspace or land the aircraft.

“Targeting aircraft with a laser pointer creates a safety threat that can put the lives of hundreds of passengers at risk,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “Our ISP Air Operations did a phenomenal job identifying the source of the light and working with officers on the ground to arrest the suspect.”

At approximately 9:45 Thursday evening, ISP Air-6 Troopers, a spotter and pilot, were participating in Special Operations Group *Operation Safe Drive*. While in the air, they reported being contacted by a hand-held device that emits amplified light (laser pointer) from the ground. Troopers used the aircraft camera and identified a residential yard in the 1200 block of Sunnyside Drive in Berkeley as the likely source of the light. Intelligence from the Federal Aviation Administration revealed several aircraft departing from Chicago O’Hare International Airport and Chicago Midway International Airport, including commercial aircraft carrying hundreds of passengers, reported the same issue from a similar geographic origin.

ISP Statewide Anti-Violence Enforcement Unit Troopers on the ground and the Berkeley Police Department were alerted and arrived at the residence where they took Martinez Castanon into custody without incident. Martinez Castanon was charged with two counts of misdemeanor Disorderly Conduct (Laser Pointer vs. Law Enforcement Officer and Laser Pointer vs. Aircraft). No further information will be disseminated.

Video taken from the plane can be found at <https://youtu.be/FIDjj9kxrFY>.

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Martinez Castanon (M/36)

*The public is reminded that all persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*

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