



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
Director of Public Relations, 352-797-3609

Re: Spring Hill Man Arrested for Pointing a Laser Light at HCSO Pilots – 2024-00142523

Date: April 26, 2024

On 04-25-24 just before 11 p.m., Deputy/Pilot Roy McLaughlin and Deputy/Pilot Steve Kling, piloting Air-1, were flying in the area of Dora Street in Spring Hill assisting ground units who were searching for a missing person.

At approximately 10:56 p.m., a green laser light was pointed at the aircraft by an individual who was standing on the back porch of the residence located at 8416 Dora Street.

Ground units were dispatched to the Dora Street address. As ground units responded, the person, described as a tall male, continued to point the green laser light at the aircraft.

As ground units began arriving at the address, Deputies McLaughlin and Kling observed the male go into the residence.

With ground units on the scene, Deputies McLaughlin and Kling departed, heading back to the Sheriff's Hangar.

Both deputies began experiencing problems with their vision after being exposed to the laser and went to a local hospital for treatment.

Deputies contacted the suspect, identified as Robert Alan Harper, at the Dora Street address. Harper admitted to pointing the laser at the aircraft. Harper turned over an air-soft pellet gun (similar to a rifle) which was equipped with a green laser, stating that is what he pointed at the aircraft.

"Pointing a laser at an aircraft isn't just foolhardy; it's downright dangerous, and against the law. This type of activity could cause temporary blindness to the pilot(s) which could lead to losing control of the aircraft. One moment of recklessness could lead to catastrophic consequences. So, let's be clear: there's no room for games when it comes to aircraft safety."
– Sheriff Al Nienhuis

Robert Alan Harper DOB/03-29-1980 was placed under arrest and charged as follows:

- Misuse of Laser Lighting Device / Pointing Laser Light at Driver or Pilot
- Bond - \$15,000.

Both deputies are expected to make a full recovery.