

Toronto aircraft laser strikes increasing

by UPI

TORONTO -- The number of laser attacks on aircraft around Toronto Lester B. Pearson International Airport is on the rise, Canadian officials said. Transport Canada spokeswoman Deborah Baxter told the Toronto Star there have been 11 reports of lasers being beamed into cockpits in Ontario since last March but said she expects many more weren't reported. Most recently, pilots of a cargo and a charter plane both reported a laser had been shone into their cockpits by someone standing near a highway north of the airport, Baxter said. Steve Lott, a spokesman for the International Air Transport Association in Montreal, told the newspaper the lasers being shone at airplanes trying to blind pilots involve more powerful lasers than the average laser pointer used in boardroom presentations. If the beams strike a pilot's eye, it can distract or temporarily blind the person. In British Columbia and the United States, several pilots have been forced to retire because of permanent retinal damage from laser beams, the Star said.

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