



Department of Justice

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New York man pleads guilty after drunken behavior forced flight to be diverted

RICHMOND, Va. – A New York man who threatened flight attendants and fellow passengers pled guilty today to interference with a flight crew.

According to court documents, on May 13, 2023, James Tyqwon Ford, 31, was a passenger on a nonstop flight from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to New York. Prior to the first beverage service, flight crew members smelled the odor of alcohol aboard the aircraft and made a general announcement that passengers are prohibited from consuming personal alcohol aboard the aircraft. Following the announcement, Ford became disruptive, being disrespectful toward to and using profanity against the flight crew.

A flight attendant advised Ford that cursing at the flight crew is not tolerated, reiterated that he could not consume personal alcohol aboard the aircraft, and notified him that law enforcement would be called when the flight landed. Ford responded with additional lewd comments and stated that the police would have to catch him first. Ford later walked to the rear galley of the aircraft and approached another flight attendant. Ford made physical threats against the first flight attendant, including that he wished to punch her in the face and shoot her.

Passengers informed flight crew members that Ford was making them fear for their safety by making lewd comments, stating that he brought a firearm aboard the plane, and threatening to “tear the plane apart.”

Ford’s wife attempted to remove a bottle of Hennessy from his possession, leading to an altercation and Ford had to be separated from her by other passengers for her to escape to a different section of the aircraft.

Ford then approached crew members at the rear galley of the plane a second time, threatening to have friends in New York follow the crew members to their hotel and “destroy them.”

Ford’s disruptive behavior, threats, and actions towards his wife forced the flight to divert from its intended destination of New York, landing instead in Richmond. Law enforcement officers met the flight upon landing and removed Ford from the plane.

Ford is scheduled to be sentenced on April 2, 2025, and faces up to 20 years in prison. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Jessica D. Aber, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Stanley M. Meador, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Richmond Field Office, made the announcement after U.S. District Judge Roderick C. Young accepted the plea.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Carla Jordan-Detamore is prosecuting the case.

A copy of this press release is located on the website of the [U.S. Attorney’s Office](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the [District Court](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 3:24-cr-142.