

Toronto man accused of posing as pilot to take hundreds of free flights

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Dhaka: A Toronto resident is facing wire fraud charges in the United States after authorities alleged he impersonated airline crew members to obtain hundreds of free flights over several years.

US prosecutors claimed 33-year-old Dallas Pokornik fabricated airline employee identification cards, allowing him to book flights intended for pilots and flight attendants without paying. The alleged scheme spanned nearly four years and, according to court documents, included at least one attempt to gain access to a cockpit jump seat — an area reserved for qualified pilots.

Pokornik was arrested in Panama and later extradited to the US, where he now faces federal charges.

Investigators said, the case bears similarities to the film Catch Me If You

Can, though prosecutors noted that Pokornik previously worked legitimately in aviation. Records indicated, he was employed as a flight attendant for a Canadian airline from 2017 to 2019 but was not working for any airline during the period in question.

After leaving the industry, prosecutors alleged Pokornik continued traveling by using counterfeit credentials to exploit employee travel benefits across three US airlines. While the airlines are not named in the indictment, they are said to be based in Honolulu, Chicago, and Fort Worth, Texas.

It is unclear whether Pokornik was ever granted access to the cockpit jump seat, but authorities said, he made the request despite not holding a pilot's license or airman certification.

Although the indictment formally covers activity between January and October 2024, the US Department of Justice said, it is aware of similar alleged conduct dating back to January 2020.

If convicted, Pokornik could face up to 20 years in prison and fines of up to USD 250,000.

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