

Greek pilots see red from laser pen pranks

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The control tower of the Athens International airport seen through a window in 2008. Greece's civil aviation pilots on Wednesday called for a crackdown on laser pen pranksters who have endangered a growing number of plane landings around the country.

Greece's civil aviation pilots on Wednesday called for a crackdown on laser pen pranksters who have endangered a growing number of plane landings around the country.

The pilots' association raised the alarm after a spate of incidents where teenagers flashed laser pens at incoming plane cockpits.

"This has been going on for around two years, apparently it's become fashionable among certain youngsters and the incidents are increasing in frequency," association chairman Grigoris Constantellos told AFP.

Around 30 laser pranks have been recorded this year, and the situation is

more dangerous in summer when pilots need to be particularly careful due to seasonal high winds, Constantellos said.

"Having the pilot blinded for three or four seconds during landing can really create a difficult situation," he said.

The two last incidents occurred on the islands of Rhodes and Crete, two of Greece's main travel destinations which thousands of tourists visit every year.

Police arrested two teenagers on Rhodes over the weekend after they forced a domestic flight to abandon its first landing approach.

Another teenager in Iraklio, Crete, was placed under judicial supervision earlier this month.

Incidents have also been reported on the island of Corfu -- another major travel destination -- and in the northern city of Thessaloniki, where in June the local prosecutor ordered police to step up patrols around Makedonia Airport.

The sale of laser pens is nominally illegal in Greece but their use is particularly popular in sports stadiums where fans use them on rival players.

[Laser](#) pens were also used against riot police in the youth protests that rocked Greece in December.

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