

Cancer-suffering pilot jailed over drug importation flight into Wollongong

By Emily Laurence



Photo: Police searched the plane when it landed at the Illawarra Regional airport in August last year. (ABC News: Billy Cooper)

A pilot has been sentenced to nine months in jail for taking part in an international drug ring by flying a small plane into Australia thought to have been carrying drugs.

Wollongong father Bernhard Stevermuer, 43, pleaded guilty in February over a plane that was raided by police at Illawarra Regional Airport last July, following a Middle Eastern Organized Crime Squad investigation into drug supply in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Police said Stevermuer had \$70,000 in cash, his payment for flying the plane from the United States across the Pacific.

Stevermuer's lawyer unsuccessfully argued that his cancer-suffering client took part in the deal because of his love of flying and wanting to secure his family's finances, and should receive a community service order.

But the sentencing magistrate in Port Kembla Local Court Michael Stoddard said that would be totally inappropriate and jailed Stevermuer until at least February 2016.

An immediate appeal to the sentence is being lodged and Stevermuer is expected to apply for bail.

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