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Waterloo student pilot sentenced to 4 years of probation for falsifying flight logs

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   DES MOINES, Iowa — An Iowa pilot who lied to federal officials to obtain a license that allowed him to fly using instruments without the necessary experience avoided prison time Wednesday when a judge settled for probation.

Attorneys for Fahad Nabeel Hussein Al-Daous, a joint resident of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia who lives in Waterloo, argued that the stay-at-home father lied about his flight hours simply to save money getting the license. But prosecutors said he posed a public safety risk, because his false logbook would have allowed him to get advanced pilot's licenses without adequate flight experience.

Prosecutors asked for a one-year prison sentence. But U.S. District Court Judge John Jarvey sided more with defense attorneys, who argued that the 33-year-old had learned his lesson, and sentenced him to four years' probation. Al-Daous had pleaded guilty to making false statements to the Federal Aviation Administration, which carried a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of up to $250,000.

> **During Wednesday's sentencing hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger said Al-Daous jeopardized public safety because he had applied to enter a commercial pilot's license program based on the falsified hours.**

Had he been successful, he could have been in a position to fly passengers with significantly less flying experience than he claimed and far fewer hours than the FAA requires.

"He was putting himself in a position to be a real danger to the community," she said.

A federal investigator testified that Al-Daous had flown about half of the hours he had claimed.

But defense attorney J. Keith Rigg said Al-Daous presented no real danger and never actually flew beyond his qualifications. Rigg said it was fraud and a shortcut to get the license, but that Al-Daous had

no intention of putting himself or anyone else in danger.

Rigg asked for a year of probation, noting that his client had no criminal history and that he is raising his three children while his wife finishes a graduate degree at the University of Northern Iowa.

Al-Daous, who was born in the U.S. and grew up in Saudi Arabia, is living in the U.S. with his family on a stipend from the Saudi government. He previously worked as a flight attendant in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Daous listened to the proceedings through headphones so an interpreter could relay what was being said in the courtroom. When asked by the attorneys, witnesses and the judge were saying.

When asked by the judge if he had anything to say, Al-Daous stood and apologized.

"I'm sorry for everybody here," he said.

Rigg and Ebinger declined comment after the hearing.

Al-Daous attended flight training at Livingston Aviation in Waterloo during 2010 and 2011.

In May 2011 he presented the log book with inflated flying hours to a pilot examiner at the Ottumwa airport, where he obtained an instrument-rated license that allows pilots to fly in conditions when instruments are required such as cloudy or bad weather.

He applied for Livingston Aviation's commercial pilot training program in September. The fraud was uncovered when the flight school compared his FAA logbook with its own billing records and found many of the flights he claimed had not occurred.

As part of his probation, Al-Daous isn't allowed to apply for a pilot's license and cannot pilot an aircraft.

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