



David A. Clarke Jr.
Sheriff

Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office **NEWS RELEASE**



**Federal Law Enforcement Officer
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Sheriff Detains Man for Arrest on Flight

Milwaukee, WI – Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr., on a flight to Charlotte, NC from Milwaukee on Saturday afternoon, detained a passenger who was harassing flight crew and intimidating passengers.

Clarke intervened midway through the flight when a man became intoxicated, loud and profane and began harassing flight crew and passengers. At one point, he started to argue with a flight attendant. The sheriff left his seat and asked if everything was all right and told the man to “chill out.” One passenger sitting near the sheriff nervously stated that he was glad I was on that flight.

Clarke directed the flight attendant to radio airport police to be standing by on arrival. The man continued his obnoxious behavior and on approach to landing he got out of his seat. The flight attendant told him to return to his seat and he continued to be loud and profane. While the plane taxied to the gate he began taunting the Sheriff, asking him what he was going to do about it. Several times during the flight he yelled to everyone that Sheriff Clarke was on the plane.

Sheriff Clarke again got out of his seat and approached the obnoxious passenger who tried to get up. Clarke ordered him to sit down and when he refused, Clarke shoved the unruly passenger face down and pinned him against the seat and held him there until the flight arrived at the gate. The sheriff watched the rest of the cabin, concerned that this may be a distraction for something else.

A police officer boarded the flight and the Sheriff asked for her handcuffs and pulled both arms behind the suspect's back and handcuffed him. The airport police took hold of the suspect and escorted him off the plane. Other officers were on hand and this obnoxious passenger began yelling at the officers at the gate where numerous passengers were waiting to board.

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Numerous passengers on the flight thanked the Sheriff for taking control of the situation. One of the pilots expressed gratitude to the Sheriff for intervening.

One of the passengers, a news editor from Milwaukee, said of Sheriff Clarke that he “witnessed the verbal abuse he took from another passenger. I thought he really handled himself well and did not respond or escalate what could have been a very bad situation in the air. He handled him well when we landed and had him arrested. He deserves a lot of credit. This guy was way over the top and also drinking. A very bad mix that could have gone really bad at 31,000 feet.”

Charlotte police charged Preston Bluntson, age 36, of Milwaukee, with ‘Intoxicated and Disruptive in Public,’ and reported that he was not at all cooperative during the intake process.

THIS IS IN NO WAY CRITICAL OF THE AIRPORT POLICE, but Sheriff Clarke believes that these incidents should be charged as federal statute violations, and reviewed by the United States Attorney’s Office to send a message of deterrence to passengers about interfering with flight crews and intimidating passengers. In fairness to local police, the FBI and TSA generally refuse to take charge of these cases, telling local police to handle it in state or municipal court. That is also our experience at Mitchell International Airport.

Clarke was also disappointed that there was no air marshal on board who could have intervened.

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