

Man detained after plane lands near Bush ranch

By Emily Ingram

WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD

Officials have detained a British man accused of flying and landing a plane near President Bush's Crawford ranch last week.

The man was taken to Austin State Hospital for a mental evaluation, where he remained

Tuesday.

McLennan County sheriff's deputies were called by the U.S. Secret Service on Friday evening to a pasture five to seven miles from the president's ranch about a possibly intoxicated pilot, Chief Deputy Randy Plemons said.

Bush was not at the ranch when the incident happened.

At the time of the call, a heavy thunderstorm was passing through the Crawford area, but Plemons said he wasn't sure what caused the pilot to land in the field.

The man was taken into custody, Plemons said.

An evaluation indicated the pilot wasn't intoxicated, but Plemons said the evaluation led officers to think the man needed a mental evaluation.

Plemons would not confirm international news and blog reports that the pilot was 62-year-old Maurice Kirk, a Welsh pilot known as the Flying Vet.

The deputy said he could not identify the pilot because the man was detained for a mental health issue.

Plemons said that despite media and blog reports, the pilot was never arrested or charged in the incident.

Newspaper stories throughout the United Kingdom reported that Kirk was piloting his World War II-era small plane when he landed near the ranch.

Kirk's wife, Kirstie, posted a note on his blog saying Kirk had wished to thank the president for help from the U.S. Coast Guard earlier this year after he crash-landed in the Atlantic Ocean about 75 miles off the coast of the Dominican Republic.

Kirk's blog went on to say that he planned to leave a note at the gate of the ranch, but was stopped by law enforcement officials.

Kirk is a former veterinarian whose license was revoked in 2002 for "disgraceful" conduct in relation to a string of arrests and court appearances, according to a story by the BBC.

Since 2001, Kirk's passion has been flying airplanes and his attempts to circumnavigate the globe solo, the BBC reports.

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