

Pilot pleads not guilty to charge of flying drunk

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DENVER, April 4 (Reuters Legal) - A commercial airline pilot charged with flying drunk while serving as second-in-command on a United Express flight pleaded not guilty in federal court on Monday.

Aaron Cope, 32, of Norfolk, Virginia, was indicted last month for allegedly being under the influence of alcohol on the December 2009 flight from Austin to Denver.

Cope was co-pilot of a regional jet with a 70-passenger capacity.

The pilot had concerns about Cope during the flight, but passengers on-board were never in danger, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Denver said.

The plane that Cope was co-piloting during the December 2009 flight was operated by Shuttle America, a unit of Indianapolis-based Republic Airways Holdings Inc.

A Shuttle America spokesman has said Cope no longer works for the company.

Cope is allowed to remain free on bond until his pending trial in federal court.

Cope declined to comment as he left the courthouse in Denver on Monday.

The case is USA v. Cope, U.S. District Court, District of Colorado, No. 11-cr-106.

For the prosecution: Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joseph Mackey and Mark Pestal.

For Cope: Timothy Anderson of Anderson & Associates.

(Reporting by Robert Boczkiewicz of Reuters; Additional reporting by Terry Baynes of Reuters Legal)