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Larry Craig quits Romney campaign as news of men's room arrest spreads

U.S. Sen. Larry Craig pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct this month after his arrest in a Minneapolis airport men's room by an undercover officer who said Craig was sending signals that he wanted to have sex.

Craig said Monday his actions were misconstrued by police and that he should not have pleaded guilty to the charges.

"At the time of this incident, I complained to the police that they were misconstruing my actions," Craig said in a release. "I was not involved in any inappropriate conduct. I should have had the advice of counsel in resolving this matter. In hindsight, I should not have pled guilty. I was trying to handle this matter myself quickly and expeditiously."

Craig agreed today to resign as the U.S. Senate co-chairman of Mitt Romney's presidential campaign. Craig served as co-chair with Robert Bennett of Utah. "He did not want to be a distraction and we accept his decision," said Romney's communications director, Matt Rhoades.

The arrest, first reported this afternoon in the magazine Roll Call, occurred June 11 at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

Craig was "detained for approximately 45 minutes, interviewed, photographed, fingerprinted and released, and police prepared a formal complaint for interference with privacy and disorderly conduct," according to the investigating officer's report, which Roll Call provided to the Idaho Statesman.

Minneapolis airport police have made "numerous arrests regarding sexual activity in the public restroom," the report said.

Nancy Peters, a spokeswoman for Hennepin County Courts in Minneapolis, confirmed that Craig pleaded guilty Aug. 8 to a misdemeanor disorderly conduct charge. Craig was fined \$1,000 and sentenced to 10 days in jail, Peters said. However, the 10-day sentence was stayed for a year, meaning that Craig avoids jail time unless he is re-arrested on a similar charge within a year.

Peters said Craig paid \$575 of the fine and won't have to pay the \$425 balance as long as he meets the terms of his yearlong probation, which will be unsupervised.

Craig told no one on his staff or Senate leadership about the arrest until it was made public in Roll Call.

Sen. Harry Reid, the Democratic majority leader, had no comment. A spokesman said he was not aware of the arrest until it was reported in Roll Call. Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Senate minority leader, was traveling in Kentucky and hadn't heard about the arrest, said spokesman Josh Holmes.

When Craig was arrested, police at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport were conducting a sting operation to investigate allegations of lewd conduct at the airport's main terminal.

According to the police reports, a man, later identified as Craig, kept watching the undercover police officer through a crack in the stall.

Craig then entered the next-door stall and placed his luggage against the opening under the stall door.

"My experience has shown that individuals engaging in lewd conduct use their bags to block the view from the front of their stall," said the officer, Sgt. Dave Karsnia, in the report.

The report continued: "At 1216 hours, Craig tapped his right foot. I recognized this as a signal used by persons wishing to engage in lewd conduct. Craig tapped his toes several times and moves his foot closer to my foot. I moved my foot up and down slowly. While this was occurring, the male in the stall to my right was still present. I could hear several unknown persons in the restroom that appeared to use the restroom for its intended use. The presence of others did not seem to deter Craig as he moved his right foot so that it touched the side of my left foot which was within my stall area."

The report said Craig swiped his hand beneath the stall divider several times, and Karsnia showed his police identification under the stall.

"With my left hand near the floor, I pointed towards the exit," the report said. "Craig responded, 'No!' I again pointed towards the exit.

Craig exited the stall with his roller bags without flushing the toilet. ... Craig said he would not go. I told Craig that he was under arrest, he had to go, and that I didn't want to make a scene. Craig then left the restroom."

Craig was detained about 45 minutes and questioned by officers at the Airport Police Operations Center. At one point, the police report said, Craig handed the arresting officer a business card that identified him as a U.S. Senator and said "What do you think about that?" Craig denied any lewd intentions and told police he has a "wide stance" in the bathroom and reached down to pick up a piece of paper from the floor.

"It should be noted that there was not a piece of paper on the bathroom floor, nor did Craig pick up a piece of paper," Karsnia wrote in the report.

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