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Fuelish Pleasure

9:06 PM 4/21/2009 by Todd Longwell, AP

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Are celebrities thinking twice about the environmental impact of private jets?

In the 2008 film "Tropic Thunder," it's portrayed as the ultimate show-business status symbol: Producer Les Grossman (Tom Cruise) tells agent Rick Peck (Matthew McConaughey) he'll give him a Gulfstream V jet, if he'll just let his client of 15 years die alone in the jungle. The look on Peck's face makes it clear he's leaning toward the deal.

In real life, Cruise has given into temptation. A licensed pilot, he's said to own three jets, including a Gulfstream IV. That's two less than another actor-pilot, John Travolta, who parks his fleet of jets (including a Boeing 707) right outside his house in Florida. Jim Carrey owns just one, but it's a top-of-the-line Gulfstream V, purchased for \$41 million in 2001. Then there are the stars who rent jets for special trips or demand them from the studios for publicity jaunts.

While no one had to die for these celebrities to get onboard, for every flight, the environment takes a significant hit.

According to a report by the Institute for Policy Studies, an hour of flying in a private jet burns as much fuel as an entire year of driving. Four passengers flying in a Cessna Citation X from Los Angeles to New York will each emit 8,892 pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere. That's 26 times more carbon than a group of four making the same trip in a Toyota Prius and six times more than if they made the trip on Amtrak. By comparison, the average American emits just 50,000 pounds of CO2 in an entire year.

While there's no indication that the recent wave of environmental awareness is inspiring stars like Travolta and Cruise to give up their wings, Daniel Hinerfield, deputy director of communications for the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), thinks there is change in the air.

Says Hinerfield: "There are a lot of business executives and celebrities who several years ago might've stepped on to a private plane without giving it a second thought who are now giving it a second -- and a third thought, and maybe not doing it."

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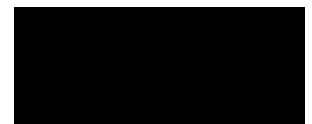
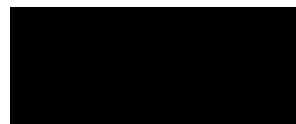
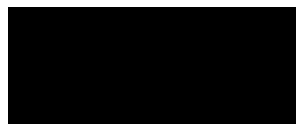
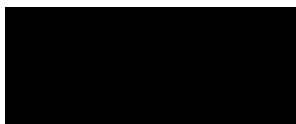
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