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Skyjacker 'Excited,' Tulane Official Says

By GEOFFREY BROWN
The gun-waving black nationalist who hijacked a Miami-bound National Airlines jet plane near New Orleans yesterday, was "obviously very excited," Dr. Edward A. Rogge, director of admissions at Tulane University, reported today.

Dr. Rogge was en route to Miami on a routine high school recruiting trip when his flight was diverted to Cuba. Today he was back in Miami continuing his business.

In a telephone interview, Dr. Rogge said the hijacker, who has not yet been officially identified by authorities, was about 5 feet, 3 inches tall and was dressed completely in black, including beret and sunglasses.

The Negro-dressed inconspicuously at first—was one of the last passengers to board the plane in New Orleans. He took a seat in the first-class section, Dr. Rogge said.

Before the plane finished climbing, the hijacker went to the restroom and changed to his Black Panther uniform. He then emerged, pulled a pistol on a stewardess and went into the pilot's compartment with her.

Passengers in the tourist class compartment did not see the incident but word was spread back to them by the other stewardesses. "We didn't really take it seriously until he started screaming over the intercom," Dr. Rogge said.

First the pilot announced that the plane's destination was being changed to Havana. The announcement ended abruptly when the hijacker knocked the microphone out of the pilot's hand, Dr. Rogge explained.

Then the hijacker said over the intercom that he was taking possession of the craft and denounced the passengers as "white devils sowing

the wind and reaping the whirlwind."

Dr. Rogge said the Negro, who was "obviously excited," spent most of the flight standing in the doorway to the pi-

lot's compartment waving his pistol and occasionally screaming at a stewardess.

There was no panic among the passengers, although many were concerned that the crew

might be in danger immediately after landing.

At one point the hijacker sent a stewardess through the cabin to collect a "donation" from each passenger. This was not robbery, he claimed, but constituted a "contraband of war."

The collection netted about \$400, all of which was returned by Cuban authorities in Havana, Dr. Rogge said.

The passengers were treated "very cordially" in Cuba, he declared. After the plane landed, Cuban security officials first hustled the hijacker off, then removed the crew and finally let the passengers out.

They were served orange juice and coffee in the airport's medical quarantine room, had two meals on the island and were flown back to Miami later in the evening.

The FBI declined to discuss the hijacker's identity today. Agents questioned passengers and crew upon their return to Miami.

But a National spokesman said a passenger listed on the manifest as Mr. H. Jackson of Baton Rouge was not on the list of passengers returning from Cuba.

EARLIER, National said the New Orleans passengers would return here on a flight this morning, but none did. The airline spokesman said the passengers were given a choice of returning home or proceeding on to their original destinations.

"They are being treated simply as delayed passengers," the spokesman told the States-Item by phone from Miami.

The passengers spent the night in Miami after being returned there yesterday aboard a propeller-driven craft from Havana.

MORRIS Bedlin, a Miami

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Beach taxi driver, said the Negro hijacker announced, "You've got a new captain," when he took over the Boeing 727 jet with 57 other passengers and seven crew members aboard shortly after it left New Orleans International Airport.

Bedlin said the hijacker announced over the public address system the seizure was part of a black nationalist movement.

"He said, 'We're going to take over a new ship every day for 100 days,'" Bedlin told newsmen.

Bedlin said the man asserted black nationalists intend to hijack commercial lines "to show the white people that we're keeping them (Negroes) down, or something like that."

Pilot Antone Hunter said the hijacker—waving a revolver with a six-inch barrel—ordered stewardess S a n d y O'Brien to collect money from the passengers.

Hunter said the hijacker held a gun to Miss O'Brien's head and forced her to unlock the cockpit door about 10 minutes out of New Orleans on National Flight 186 from Houston to Miami via New Orleans.

MISS O'Brien said the hijacker boarded the plane wearing a blue blazer and "looked very nice." She said he changed in a restroom, however, to emerge wearing black slacks, black shoes, black shirt, black beret, black leather jacket and dark glasses.

Off the Cuban coast, Hunter said, two Cuban jet fighters flew alongside the airliner.

The hijacker was whisked away quickly after landing in Cuba. The airliner was released and the crew returned it to Miami last night.

Cuban officials, H u n t e r said, told him "safety and security" would not permit it to take off loaded. The passengers were bussed to Vera-dero, a two-hour ride away, and a four-engine propeller-driven plane chartered by the U.S. State Department flew there to pick them up.