

*Panther Leader Cleav*

# GUNMAN FORCES



MASON RUDOLPH

*er Suspected*

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12-11-68

# JET TO CUBA

MIAMI (AP)—A Trans World jetliner on its inaugural flight from St. Louis to Miami was hijacked today and the FBI is investigating the possibility fugitive Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver and his wife are involved.

The plane was hijacked over Tennessee and Capt. Dennis Maloney, who said he had a gun at his back, landed it in Havana with the crew of eight and 32 passengers safe.

As the plane touched down at Jose Marti airport, a young Negro couple, apparently the hijackers, were escorted

off first by Cuban security officials.

IN MIAMI, an FBI spokesman said there will be an investigation to determine if the Negro man was Cleaver, the Oakland, Calif., Black Panther leader who is being sought as a parole violator and has sworn he will never return to prison.

The FBI said yesterday Cleaver's wife, Kathleen, withdrew \$33,000 from his San Francisco bank account and flew last Sunday to New York. Her later whereabouts were unreported.

Shortly after takeoff from Nashville, Maloney radioed that "a guy has a gun at my

back" and he was changing course for Cuba.

"He is forcing us to go to Havana," Capt. Dennis Maloney advised the Atlanta control tower. "We are proceeding there."

THE HIJACKER entered the cockpit shortly after takeoff from Nashville. At the time of the call, the plane was 10 miles south of Chattanooga.

Trans World said Mason Rudolph, the professional golfer, and Tex Ritter, country and Western singing star, boarded the flight, No. 496, at Nashville.

The Boeing 727 was inaugurating a flight making stops

See HIJACK Page 6



TEX RITTER

## Hijack--

Continued from Front Page

for the first time at Nashville. It took off from St. Louis at 8:15 a.m., landed in Nashville at 9:04 a.m. and was due in Miami at 12:17 p.m.

THE PLANE landed at Havana's Jose Marti airport at 12:27 p. m. Under normal procedure by Cuban authorities, the crew will be sent back with the plane today and the passengers returned on a special U.S. flight tomorrow.

It was the 19th hijacking this year of a U.S. commercial airliner. A National Air Lines plane diverted to Cuba Dec. 3 was the last previous one.

WHEN THE plane came within radio and radar contact of the Miami tower, Grafius said the pilot "acknowledged instructions but has said nothing else about the hijacking."

Other crew members were identified as First Officer De Los O. Soehren, Flight Engineer Phil D. Walthall and hostesses Susan Brandt, Patricia Gula, Carolyn Lizza and Shirley Miller, all from the Kansas City area.