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HIJACKERS LEFT COMRADE BEHIND

No Room on Plane, Says
Airline Official

MIAMI (AP) — The 15 hijackers who commandeered an Ecuadorian airliner to Havana—using three machineguns to punctuate death threats—left one of their comrades behind because there was no room on the plane, an airline official said Monday.

Simon Uribe, traffic manager for Ecuatoriana de Aviacion, was one of 61 passengers aboard the flight flown to Miami Monday from Cuba. He said the 16th member of the hijack brigade was left behind for lack of seating space.

The flight was hijacked Sunday with 81 persons on board. The 15 members of the hijack squad stayed in Cuba. The crew of the plane flew to Miami Monday ahead of the passengers who came on a special charter flight.

MEMBERS OF AMAZON

Uribe said the hijackers told him they were members of the group called Amazon. He said he had never heard of the organization.

Armando Espinel, executive secretary to Ecuadorian President Jose Velasco Ibarra, also was aboard the flight.

"They gave me special treatment in Havana," Espinel said. "They gave me an automobile and a chauffeur and put me up at the Havana Libre Hotel."

Espinel said he was given "a Buick and a Chevrolet, I don't know what years, but well preserved."

The other passengers were taken by bus to a hotel in Varadero, Cuba, to await the Miami flight.

Espinel said: "The hijackers seemed very nervous—probably more nervous than we. They looked as if they were desperate."

Nelly Espinel said, "At first

we didn't think much about this since hijackings are sort of in style nowadays, but before it was over I will admit I was frightened."

The pilot of the plane, Capt. Dean Ricker of Miami, said: "One of them showed me a homemade bomb."

Capt. Ricker said the prop-jet Electra, which left Miami at 2 a. m. Sunday, had stopped at Guayaquil, Ecuador, and was en route to Quito when three of the hijackers burst into the cockpit.

"I told them I didn't have enough fuel to make it," he recalled and said he suggested a landing in Panama to refuel.

SUGGESTION REJECTED

Ricker said the hijackers, including three women, rejected the suggestion and instead selected Barranquilla, Colombia, where President Carlos Lleras Restrepo withheld the fuel until the hijackers threatened to kill Ricker.

"The passengers were beginning to get very frightened at Barranquilla," said Maria Flores, a 24-year-old stewardess aboard the plane. "But we looked after them and calmed them."

After three hours on the ground at Barranquilla, the plane was refueled and went on the Havana's Jose Marti Airport where Ricker said the 15 hijackers, whose ages he said ranged from 15 to 25, left the plane yelling "Viva Fidel!"—"Long Live Fidel!" He said they were taken into custody by airport guards.

The crew and plane arrived in Miami about 12 hours after the passengers of an Eastern Airlines jet—also hijacked Sunday—touched down in Miami. They told of a hijacker with a hand grenade who diverted the EAL plane—with 182 persons aboard—while enroute from New York to Miami.