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HELD HOSTAGE: Hijacked jets, a Trans World Airlines 707, left, and Swissair DC-8 being guarded by tanks and armored cars of the Jordanian Army. Inside this ring the Palestinian commandos are holding the passengers hostage.

Life on Jets Held in Desert Is Harsh

By ERIC PACE

Special to The New York Times

EL KHANA, Jordan, Sept. 8

—Hostage crewmen of the two airliners being held in the desert by Arab hijackers said today that living conditions on board were bad and growing worse.

The crewmen, along with some of the 200-odd passengers, appeared at a news conference arranged by their captors on a desert plateau 40 miles northeast of Amman. As they spoke, the planes stood 300 yards away, gleaming under the harsh sun, camels ambled along the desert skyline and Jordanian Army trucks in the distance

sent up plumes of dust. Twenty spokesmen for the hostages said that there were about 30 children aboard and that, although conditions were deteriorating, all were in fairly good shape.

Cases of Hives Reported

"None of the children are sick, but they break out in hives," said Alfred A. Kiburis, the flight engineer of one jetliner, a Boeing 707 of Trans World Airlines.

C. D. Woods, the captain of the T.W.A. plane, said, "The sanitary conditions on the aircraft were good at first and they are still good but they are deteriorating."

Asked how long the pas-

sengers could hold out, he said, "It's a difficult question. If we could flush the toilets, we could go for some time.

The commandos said that they were supplying the passengers with food and water from a field kitchen.

A Swissair steward, Michel Weis, indicated that conditions were worse on his plane.

The T.W.A. 707 and the Swissair jet, a DC-8, were hijacked on Sunday by commandos of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and flown to the Jordan-

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ian desert. In all, four planes were diverted over Europe while heading for New York; a 747 of Pan American World Airways was taken to Beirut and then to Cairo, where it was blown up, and an El Al Israel Airlines 707 landed in London after one hijacker was killed and another captured.

Return of Body Sought

Today, a spokesman for the Popular Front who is known as Bassam indicated that none of the hostages would be freed until the British Government released Miss Leila Khaled, the commando who was seized on the El Al plane, and returned the body of her male accomplice.

At the news conference in the desert, Captain Woods said the food and water had been adequate, but other hostages said in conversation that some Jewish passengers were refusing to eat the non-kosher food provided and had been eating only eggs.

Captain Woods, dusty and looking tired, said morale had been "quite good, considering you've got almost a full airplane—naturally there's a problem occasionally but it's been real good."

T.W.A. crew members said that the 30 children on their plane included two infants. Bassam, the commando spokesman, declined to say whether the children were all of Israeli or Jewish passengers, as some freed passengers have said.

Mostly women and children. 127 of those aboard the planes were released yesterday and taken to Amman, the Jordanian capital, aboard army buses. The commandos propose to exchange the rest of the captives for Arab guerrillas held prisoner in Britain, West Germany, Switzerland and Israel.

Reporters were guarded by Popular Front guerrillas with submachine guns as they questioned the hostages—two of them wearing yarmulkas.

Scores of commandos were also on guard around the aircraft, which have grown duty on flat stretch of desert. The white and red tail of the Swissair DC-8 and the pale tail of the T.W.A. 707 are visible from a mile or so away, at the outside of the ring of Jordanian tanks and armored cars that surrounds the commandos. No friction was reported between the troops and the commandos today. 8

Also standing near the planes were two Iraqi Army officers. Iraqi units in the fight against Israel are deployed in Jordan and sympathize with the commando movement in its continuing friction with the Jordanian Government.

A Barefoot Stewardess

One hostage, who appeared barefoot before the reporters, was a T.W.A. stewardess identified as June P. Haesler. She and others took seats at Bassam's bidding.

The stewardess said that some of the children were getting restless. The commandos say that they have taken some for jeep rides near the plane and that other passengers were allowed out for a walk this

morning.

One passenger identified himself as Jonathan David of New York. He said, "were all just waiting and wondering whether there will be a settlement."

Asked about the Jewish hostages, Bassam said, "We are not holding them because they are Jewish—they're being kept for interrogation." He did not elaborate, but denounced what he called "United States imperialism."

Asked whether the commandos planned to destroy the planes, he said, "You will know later."

Bassam noted that the Swiss and West German Governments

had agreed to the commando's demands that they release imprisoned commandos. But, he said, "We want all or none" in a reference to the hijacker held in London.

When reporters arrived at the landing site earlier in the day, a mirage of a pool of water was visible from the distance to one side of the planes, which reporters were not allowed to enter. They were

greeted by a Popular Front commando named Abu Ezz and by other jubilant young commandos with submachine guns. One cried, "This is a very good airport; we will fill it with airplanes if Allah is willing."

"All the people, they are well today," said Abu Ezz in German. "We have everything for the passengers including a

doctor. "He waved toward the aircraft, which had a Palestinian banner dropping beside them, along with a row of camouflaged commando trucks and toter vehicles.

Commandos said that they were providing passengers with what water and food they needed from a commando field kitchen.

The commandos said they had been indoctrinating passengers on the Palestinian refugee problem, but what effect this has had was not known.

Jordanians said today that the stretch of naturally flat desert, known as Dawson's Field, had been used by the Royal Air Force in past decades. It was hot and very dusty under the sun today.

In Amman, the passengers who were freed yesterday ambled through the lobby of the Jordan Intercontinental Hotel, near where mortar shells struck last night. There were no casualties, and who fired the shells was not disclosed.

Occasional shooting and tension continued in the capital, and commandos at the Popular Front's information center downtown appeared tense.