

'Very Calm' Gunman Hijacks Miami-Bound Plane to Cuba

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Passengers Include Pro Golfer, Country Singer

MIAMI, Fla. (AP) — A super-cool gunman with a smiling female companion Wednesday hijacked an inaugural nonstop Trans World Airlines flight between Nashville and Miami and forced the plane to fly to Cuba.

Pilot Dennis Maloney said the slender gunman was fast-working and "calm, very calm and very calculating."

He said, "It all happened in a matter of seconds."

The Negro man entered the cockpit with a gun trained on stewardess Susan Brandt, the pilot said. "If you take me to Havana, nobody will get hurt," Maloney said he was told.

Miss Brandt said the 30 other passengers, including veteran pro golfer Mason Rudolph and country music singer Tex Rit-

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PLANE HIJACKED

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ter, remained calm throughout their kidnaping.

The gunman's companion, said the stewardess, sat by herself in the passenger compartment and at times broke into smiles. Miss Brandt said the woman affected an Afro-American hair style and appeared to be about six months pregnant.

Capt. Maloney scotched rumors that the hijacker may be fugitive Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver. "I cannot identify that man as the hijacker," said the pilot when shown a picture of Cleaver, the object of a search by federal agents on a parole violation.

The hijack couple was led off the plane in Havana and taken to a waiting room where it was reported they cooled their heels for more than six hours before being questioned by Cuban officials.

The plane was commandeered over an area just south of Chattanooga, Tenn.

"A guy has a gun at my back," Maloney radioed shortly after the Boeing 727, with 32 travelers and seven crewmen aboard, took off from Nashville following an airport celebration.

"He is forcing us to go to Havana. We are proceeding there," the pilot said.

The plane, 19th U. S. commercial airliner forced into Cuba during this year's unprecedented wave of skyjackings, landed at 12:27 p.m., EST.

Since May 1, 1961, 38 planes have been hijacked and Rep. Thomas E. Morgan, D-Pa., of a congressional investigating subcommittee, said Tuesday "all preventive measures have failed." Prime Minister Fidel Castro has not responded to U. S. urgings that the hijackers be returned for prosecution.

The flight originated at St. Louis, taking off at 8:15 a.m.