

# Chain Reaction Is Set Off After Airliner Hijacked

Activity Continues Until Passengers Return

By STRATTON L. DOUTHAT  
 MIAMI (AP) —“We’re going to Havana,” says the tense voice. This almost daily radio message sets off a chain reaction of activity—both in the United States and Cuba—that doesn’t cease until the hijacked planes and passengers are released by Fidel Castro and land in Miami.

A majority of the U.S. hijack reports are first received at the Federal Aviation Administration traffic control centers in Miami or Jacksonville because most of the hijackings occur in their areas.

Usually, the pilots give only a terse: “We’re going to Havana.” Federal officials say the pilots feel the less they say the less chance they’ll upset the armed hijackers, who normally are in a highly emotional state during the sidetrips to Cuba.

At first word, the FAA office in Miami notifies the State Department and the airline whose plane is being pirated.

### ASKS PERMISSION

An officer at the State Department’s Cuban Affairs Section in Miami immediately notifies Washington, which in return sends two cables to the Swiss Embassy in Havana.

The first message asks for permission for the plane and passengers to be allowed to return from Havana, and is only a matter of form. The passengers almost always are bussed to Va-

radero and flown to Miami by special charter planes. The second asks permission to send the charter planes to Baradero, 60 miles east of Havana.

Meanwhile, the FAA Air Route Traffic Control Center in Miami gets on its hot line to the Havana traffic control tower with an alert the plane is en route and asks for weather and landing information.

This information is relayed to the hijacked airliner pilot who must have the Havana heading

and weather report

The FAA stays in radio contact—although normally there is no exchange—and maintains radar instruction until the plane crosses 24th parallel over the Florida Straits where the Havana traffic tower takes control and brings the plane in at Jose Marti Airport.

Once down, the hijacker or hijackers are always first off and are taken into custody by airport guards. The traffic tower at the airport alerts Miami that

the plane has landed safely.

Swiss Embassy officials relay the State Department requests to the Cubans who usually let the crew and plane fly to Miami within a few hours.

First word that U.S. authorities have that the plane is being released comes when the pilot files his flight plan at Havana. FAA officials say relations between their traffic staff and the Cubans are cordial but strictly professional.

The passengers usually are released several hours after the plane. They are fed, and put up in a Havana hotel if the theft occurred at night, before being given a sightseeing tour of the Cuban countryside as the bus takes them to Varadero.

Payment for meals and lodging is made immediately by the Swiss Embassy which later passes on the charges to the respective airlines.

Upon landing in Miami, crew members of hijacked planes are met by FBI agents who question them before allowing them to talk with reporters. Passengers usually forego FBI interrogation but must go through Customs before going their respective ways.

Customs officials confiscate any Cuban products brought back. The most popular are Havana cigars and island rum.