

Federal Prisoner Hijacks TWA Jetliner to Havana

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Stewardess Threatened
with Razor Blade

By RICH OPPEL

MIAMI (AP) — A hulking federal prisoner escaped from two U.S. marshals, placed a razor blade to a stewardess' neck, and hijacked a jetliner with 131 persons aboard to Cuba, Thursday, officials reported.

The prisoner was identified only as "L. Perry," traveling in a first class compartment under the custody of two federal agents, William Lavin and Joseph Hart.

"He must be the man," said Nancy McLemore, a public relations officer for Trans World Airlines. "He was the only one who didn't get off."

One passenger said neither of the federal agents were armed because airline rules barred them from carrying weapons aboard the plane.

"He was milling around a magazine rack in the galley, and when a stewardess passed by him, he put a razor blade to her neck," Robert Crawford, 34, of St. Louis said.

The Trans World Airlines jet bound for Los Angeles with 123 passengers was hijacked as it passed west of Tulsa, Okla., at 2:19 p.m.

"I knew it was hijacked when the plane banked sharply south and the captain said we were going to Havana," said Crawford, who sat near the hijacker.

The hijacker, tall, heavy-set and wearing a sports jacket and tie, remained in the cabin until the Boeing 727 landed at Havana's Jose Marti airport at 5 p.m.

The stony-faced air pirate calmly walked out of the cabin as the plane pulled to a stop, picked up a wrinkled brown paper bag from his seat and met two uniformed Cuban militiamen at the plane's exit door.

"Are you armed?" one of the guards asked him," passengers said.

"No, I just have a razor blade," he said.

Fourteen year old Kathy Lewis of Jacksonville, Ill., on her way to Los Angeles with her father for a vacation, said she and other passengers deplaned and watched Cubans gawk at them as they ate roast beef and cheese sandwiches in the air-

port terminal.

"They (the Cubans) tried to be nice, but they couldn't speak English," she said.

The Rev. Kenneth Grass, enroute to his new parish at Santa Barbara, Calif., plunked down a \$5 bill for a bottle of Cuban rum. But customs agents at Miami confiscated it and the Catholic priest bemoaned, "They should have told me that was going to happen when I bought it."

1, sit between two officers.

bound for Los Angeles. Perry, tall, heavy-set, stony-faced, grabbed his opportunity.

U.S. MARSHAL William Lavin and a prison guard, Joseph Hart, allowed him to leave his seat. He walked to a magazine rack beside the galley and stood there until stewardess Deborah Sullivan walked past.

"He put a razor blade to my throat and told me to go into the cockpit," the 19-year-old redhead said.

Winging over Wichita, Kan., the Boeing 727 liner with 131 persons aboard swung south for Cuba. As it landed, Perry strode calmly out of the cabin, picked up a brown paper bag from his seat and met two Cuban militiamen at the door.

"Are you armed?" they asked.

"No," he replied, "I just have a razor blade."

AND PERRY was led away, free of an American prison, but to an unknown fate on the Communist island.

The U.S. Marshal's office in Miami said Lavin would not talk to newsmen about why Perry was allowed to roam around the plane and how he managed to pull the hijack while in custody of two officers.

And it said a deposition Lavin was giving on the case today would not be released for publication.

Airline regulations do not permit escorted prisoners to be handcuffed on grounds that they need freedom of their hands to protect themselves in event of an aircraft emergency.

BUT A TWA spokesman said it is required that the prisoner

Perry was being taken to California to stand trial in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles in connection with the robbery Feb. 5, 1965, of Security First National Bank in North Downey. Two men robbed the bank of \$5,383 in federal reserve notes.

The FBI said Perry had confessed to the crime in prison.