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NS STATES-ITEM

Hijack Victims on 2 Jets Relate Similar Stories

MIAMI (AP) — Two plane-loads of travelers, forced to Cuba at gunpoint by separate teams of hijackers, returned to the United States with strikingly similar stories of the latest acts of air piracy.

A Pan American Airways jet, commandeered by three gunmen over the Atlantic Ocean after leaving New York for San Juan, P.R., landed in Havana yesterday minutes after the first hijack victims of the week-end were flown to freedom.

An Eastern airliner en route to Miami from Chicago was taken over Saturday night by a team of five men who forced their way into the cockpit at gunpoint, then stood their victims a round of drinks.

HIJACKERS of the Eastern plane previously fled Cuba into exile, Havana Radio said today, and returned from the United States because "the delinquency, the gangsterism and the corruption existing in that country made their life unbearable."

"In addition, some of them referred as causes to the haphazard existence they had to live as a consequence of the high cost of living and the lack of medical attention for those who, like them, could not pay the high price," the radio said in a broadcast monitored in Miami.

THE 78 Eastern passengers were returned to the United States in a plane chartered by the U.S. State Department. Cuban authorities released the stolen jetliners and crews a few hours later.

The same charter plane was dispatched back to the Communist island and retrieved the Pan American passengers early today.

Both captains said they learned their crafts had been hijacked when gun-waving men entered the cockpits shouting identical orders — "Cuba! Cuba! Cuba!" Pan American Capt. Alvin Walker said, "It didn't take us long to decide. I told him, 'Don't shoot. Sit down. We go to Cuba.'"

EASTERN PILOT Robert Silver said that when his abductor pointed a pistol and ordered the new destination, "I looked at him and smiled and said, 'That's no problem. We're on the way.'"

After initial tensions eased, passengers on both planes reported their kidnappings took on an almost restive atmosphere.

Eastern stewardess Nancy Corson said one of the hijackers gave her \$20 and insisted that she serve the passengers a round of drinks.

WHEN SERVED, passenger David Ruxton of Chicago said he was told the drink was on "the gentleman in the back with the gun."

Honeymooners Joseph and Ellen Hunoval of South Orange, N. J., said the apparent leader of the Pan American hijackers sat with them for awhile and described him as congenial.

Mrs. Hunoval, 24, told him that he was interrupting the first day of the couple's honeymoon "and he said he was very sympathetic" and "very sorry to inconvenience us."