

Tape of Hijacker Used in Effort To Prove He Is Faking Insanity

By ROBERT LINDSAY

A Federal prosecutor sought yesterday to use the recorded words of a confessed hijacker to convince a jury that the hijacker had "devised one of the biggest hoaxes society has ever seen" in leading psychiatrists to believe he was insane.

The defendant in the case, Garrett B. Trapnell, has admitted hijacking a Los Angeles-to-New York Trans World Airlines jet last Jan. 29 and trying unsuccessfully to extort \$306,800 from the line. The hijacking ended when he was shot by a Federal agent at Kennedy International Airport.

Contending that he does not remember the incident and that he suffers from schizophrenia, Trapnell says that it was an alter ego by the name of "Gregg Ross" who carried it out and that therefore he should be acquitted.

The case goes to a Federal jury in Brooklyn this morning.

In a 90-minute summation, Peter R. Schlam, an assistant United States Attorney, said that Trapnell had hijacked the plane as a "cold-blooded, premeditated, well-planned" effort to extort money.

He noted that the defendant had a long criminal record and had admitted a \$500,000 jewel robbery in the Bahamas, seven bank robberies in Canada and a number of other major crimes.

Staying Out of Prison

He said Trapnell had repeatedly been arrested after committing crimes but in each case had evaded prison by convincing psychiatrist he was insane.

Mr. Schlam played an excerpt from a recorded interview that Trapnell gave after his arrest last year to a freelance writer, Cyrus Berlowitz. In the interview, Trapnell is said to boast of knowing how to fool psychiatrists by pleading "temporary insanity" to escape prison.

"I'm a classic N.G.I. [not guilty, insanity]," the tape-recorded voice said. "It's a license to kill. I could go out on the street in New York, shoot 10 people, and in six months I'd be free. Isn't that weird?"

"In one of my first busts,"

he continued, "a lawyer came to me and said, 'Trap, look, you're going to prison for 20 years or you can go to the state hospital.' So I went to the state hospital and I dug the whole action, man. I read every book on psychiatry and psychology, probably more than any psychologist will in any school in the world."

His ploy, he told the interviewer, was to convince psychiatrists that he moved in and out of his alter ego. "It's a classic Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde situation," he said. "You dig it?"

He said psychiatry was an inexact science. "Ten psychiatrists—put them together and they will all come up with different answers."

'Fallacy of System'

"The fact remains that I have committed all of these crimes and had never gotten a 'number' for any of them. It's like—it's your system, baby, it's not mine. It's the fallacy of your legal system."

The transcript of the interview had been subpoenaed by the government, which also called two former confederates of Trapnell. They testified that he had instructed them in how to feign insanity.

Of the professionals testifying at the five-week trial before Judge George Rosling, one psychologist and four psychiatrists said that he was indeed insane and two psychiatrists for the prosecution said they believed that he was a clever faker.

In his summation, Richard Rosenkranz, Trapnell's defense lawyer, maintained that one of the confederates, George Padilla, had lied in order to get a reduction of his jail term in Texas.

He said there were many facets of the hijacking that indicated that Trapnell was mentally unbalanced and also recalled that Trapnell had come from a broken family—that his mother was an alcoholic, that his father died when he was young and that his stepmother had thrown him out when he was 13 years old.