

NYTimes
Hijacker Slain by F.B.I. Agent at Kennedy

JUL 24 1971

**2 Hostages,
 Over 2d Jet**

McFADDEN

led a three-hour episode of drama that had threatened lives of 60 persons aboard Chicago-bound jet; the stewardess, Idie Maria Concepcion; T.W.A. driver, Jake Mer-

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Continued on Page 16, Column 2 a .308-caliber automatic rifle with a telescopic sight. One bullet hit the hijacker in the right shoulder, passed through his body and exited from his left arm. The other passed through his mid-section from left to right.

According to a spokesman at Jamaica Hospital, two miles north of the airport, Obergfell was dead on arrival, although doctors attempted for 15 minutes to revive him.

The president of T.W.A., F. C. Wisner, issued a statement last night expressing the company's gratitude to the F.B.I. for saving the lives of the hostages and for "forestalling the further hijacking of a T.W.A. aircraft to Europe with all the potential tragedy that might result from an armed man in charge of a crew."

The shooting of Obergfell—the first fatal shooting of a hijacker in the United States, according to the Federal Aviation Administration—ended a drama that had begun shortly after T.W.A.'s Flight 335 left La Guardia Airport at 1:45 P.M., bound for Chicago.

On board were 55 passengers and a crew of five, including Miss Concepcion, a petite young woman in a beige pants-suit uniform who has been a stewardess for only two months.

She was working in the plane's first-class section, taking drink orders when, about 20 minutes into the flight, she noticed Obergfell, sitting on the right-hand aisle, because he appeared nervous and was sweating profusely.

Obergfell, a thin man clad in olive-drab chinos and an orange shirt open at the neck, had a jacket draped over his knees and what looked to Miss Concepcion like a white torn T-shirt underneath, which evidently was wrapped around his Luger-like P-38 pistol.

The stewardess offered to get him a drink, but he refused. At the same time, she said, he made some fuss about the torn T-shirt, saying: "Oh, my God. Look at this thing. I've been cleaning the car."

Suspicion Aroused

"I was very suspicious," Miss Concepcion said. "Everything they had told us in training about the description of a hijacker—what they told us to report to the cockpit—fitted to a 'T.'"

"I wasn't going to the cockpit right away, so I wouldn't make him suspicious. I turned around and I was going to take more drink orders when all of a sudden I felt something hard in my back and an arm around me."

The "something hard" was Obergfell's gun.

"I'm not going to hurt you if you do what I say," the hijacker told her, and ordered her to accompany him to the cockpit. There, he ordered the captain, Albert R. Hawes, 42, of Hopatcong, N.J., to "take this plane to Milan, Italy."

The pilot explained the plane was neither fueled nor equipped for such a flight and said the hijacker would have to "change planes" to traverse the Atlantic.

The hijacker then agreed to return to La Guardia, and Captain Hawes notified both his passengers and the control tower at La Guardia that he was returning.

The plane landed at 2:28 P.M. and taxied up to the Eastern Air Lines shuttle terminal, where official cars quickly surrounded the craft.

Retaining Miss Concepcion as a hostage, the hijacker allowed the other crew members and all passengers to disembark. In addition, the official cars,

including the police vehicles, were removed at the hijacker's demand.

Some of the passengers snapped pictures of the hijacker as he walked down a ramp with a blue bag in one hand and his gun in the other, stuck in the back of Miss Concepcion. On the apron, Obergfell met Frank Weaver, T.W.A. manager of passenger services at La Guardia, for a vehicle to take him to Kennedy Airport.

A six-passenger panel truck, driven by Mr. Mernick, a maintenance foreman, was provided, along with an unmarked police car as an escort. Police cars along the route to Kennedy—the Van Wyck Expressway—were warned not to interfere with the truck.

As the truck was speeding toward Kennedy, authorities mobilized for the emergency, fueling a T.W.A. 707 jet normally used for trans-Atlantic flights and stationing F.B.I. men with rifles and bullet-proof vests behind a solid metal fence erected to shield the blast of jet exhausts.

Shortly after 3 P.M., the truck carrying the hijacker, Miss Concepcion and Mr. Mernick arrived at the end of Runway 22 in the northeastern extremity of the airport, three-quarters of a mile from the T.W.A. terminal.

The same site had been used when F.B.I. agents shot and wounded a 23-year-old railroad clerk who hijacked a T.W.A. jet in Chicago on June 12 and flew to New York with intentions of getting another plane to take him to North Vietnam.

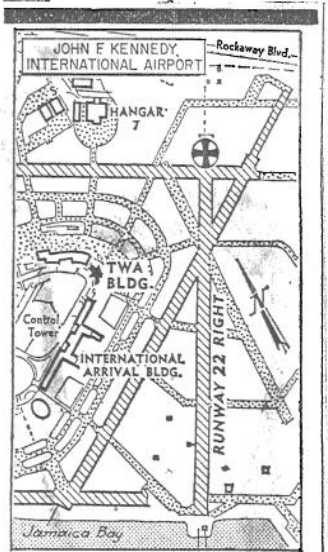
The same site also was used in refueling the jet hijacked by Raffaele Minichiello from California to Rome 20 months ago.

Obergfell yesterday had two conversations with F.B.I. agents who approached the parked panel truck where he sat awaiting the plane that was to take him to Milan. Miss Concepcion said the efforts of F.B.I. agents to dissuade him from the flight only irritated the hijacker, who, she said, also rejected the offer of an unidentified clergyman of funds to pay his passage.

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ker from papers in his possession as Richard A. Obergfell, 27 years old, of Passaic, N. J. He was cut down by two high-powered rifle bullets fired by an F.B.I. agent as he walked toward a waiting T.W.A. jet with his nine-shot German-made pistol trained on the back of the terrified stewardess.

The shooting, which occurred at 4:20 P.M. at the end of a runway in the northeastern corner of Kennedy Airport,



The New York Times July 24, 1971
Hijacker was shot at the end of runway (cross).