

Hijacker Kills 2, Then Himself

Pilot Critically Hurt During Shoot-Out at Baltimore Airport

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Washington Post Staff Writers

An unemployed salesman, who was reported to have made a threat against President Nixon in 1972, killed an airport guard and a pilot before shooting himself to death when he failed to hijack a jet airliner early yesterday at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

Firing a pistol wildly and carrying a crude suitcase bomb, Samuel Joseph Byck, 44, of Philadelphia, also critically wounded another pilot and subjected eight passengers and three stewardesses on the Atlanta-bound Delta Airlines jet to 10 minutes of terror before he was shot in the chest by a policeman firing through a small port-hole of thick glass in the plane's door. Byck then shot himself in the head.

Byck, who was twice arrested while frequently picketing the White House here last year, had been investigated by the Secret Service in late 1972 "when it came to our attention that he had made an alleged threat against the President," according to Secret Service spokesman Jack Warner.

The investigation was dropped, Warner said, when Byck was committed to Philadelphia General Hospital in January, 1973, for mental observation. Warner would not describe the alleged threat against the President and did not know when Byck was released from the Philadelphia hospital.

There also were no clues yesterday as to what Byck's motive was when he forced his way onto the plane at Baltimore's airport yesterday by killing an airport security guard at the boarding gate. Byck then shot and killed the plane's copilot and critically wounded the pilot after he was frustrated by their slowness in readying the plane to take off.

Police, FBI agents, passengers and airport authorities provided this account of the predawn shootings:

Minutes before the Delta plane's scheduled 7:15 a.m. departure, as its 49 passengers were passing through a security checkpoint and covered boarding ramp to the plane, Byck suddenly appeared from behind a wall near a metal detector and fired several shots from a .22-caliber pistol in the back of the head of security guard George Neil Ramsburg, 24, of Simpsonville, Md.

"I heard two muffled shots and saw the guard slump forward," said Keith Wheeland, a student at Pennsylvania State University who was standing next to the metal detector. "Then I saw a guy with sunglasses and a raincoat with a gun in his hand. He undid the rope and ran down the entranceway toward the plane."

Byck, dressed in a black raincoat and clutching a gasoline incendiary device hidden in a small black suitcase, then ran through the covered "jetway" ramp and onto the plane.

"We believe at this point that he was planning on hijacking the plane and blowing it up," said Thomas F. Farrow, special agent in charge of the FBI's Baltimore office. "If that gasoline bomb went off while the plane was in the air there is no question that we would have had a major catastrophe."

As Byck ran along the 20-yard entrance ramp, he waved his gun at four boarding passengers and yelled, "Get out. Get out."



CHARLES BRUCE TROYER
... shoots gunman twice

See HIJACK, A10, Col. 1

HIJACK, From A1

"He was waving his gun and yelling and running right at us," said Charles Rosch, of Baltimore, who was about to board the plane with his wife, Frances. "He looked

like any other passenger except for that gun. It was all I really noticed."

Charles Bruce Troyer, an Anne Arundel County policeman assigned to the airport, said he heard the shots Byck fired at Ramsburg and began

running toward the plane's entrance ramp.

Troyer stopped to pick up the dead guard's .357 Magnum pistol, and fired one shot with his own .38-caliber revolver at the gunman just as the plane's door swung

closed. The shot ricocheted harmlessly off the door, Troyer said, as Byck moved inside the plane to the cockpit.

Byck told the pilot and copilot, who were seated in the plane's cockpit, "Fly this plane out of here." When the plane's pilot, Reece Douglas Loftin, 39, of Ft. Worth, Texas, protested that plane's wheels were blocked and the exit doors had not been sealed, Byck fired three shots into the cockpit wall.

As a stewardess went back to seal the doors Byck told Loftin and copilot Freddie D. Jones, 32, of Dallas, "The next shot will be in your head."

Byck then shot both pilots and grabbed an unidentified woman passenger pulling her into the cockpit and telling her "Help this man fly the plane."

After releasing the first woman Byck grabbed another female passenger by the hair, pulling her into the cabin. With the passenger in tow, Byck fired several more shots at Loftin and Jones.

Jones was shot in the shoulder, the kidney region and killed by a bullet fired into his head.

While the shooting was taking place, Byck's second woman captive ran to the rear of the plane and joined seven other passengers and two stewardesses who were crawling through a rear emergency door of the plane.

One of the stewardesses, Karen Smoot, 21, of Chicago, fractured a vertebra as she jumped from the plane's wing. She was taken to nearby North Arundel Hospital where a spokesman yesterday listed her condition as fair.

After Byck shot the two pilots for a second time, Troyer, the Anne Arundel policeman, who was standing outside the airliner's locked door, waved away a third stewardess still inside the plane and fired the .357 caliber magnum at the gunman through the door's six-inch port hole.

Two of the shots hit Byck in the chest so close together, the FBI spokesman said, "that you could have put a silver dollar over them."

Dr. Russell Fisher, an associate pathologist with the Maryland state medical examiner's office in Baltimore, said the chest shots did not kill the gunman. The fatal wound, he said, was made by Byck's own .22 caliber pistol that he fired into his right temple. Powder burns on Byck's fingers, he said, indicated that Byck killed himself.

The gunman's suitcase, which police said contained a crudly made gasoline bomb, was removed from the plane by police and U.S. Army bomb disposal experts



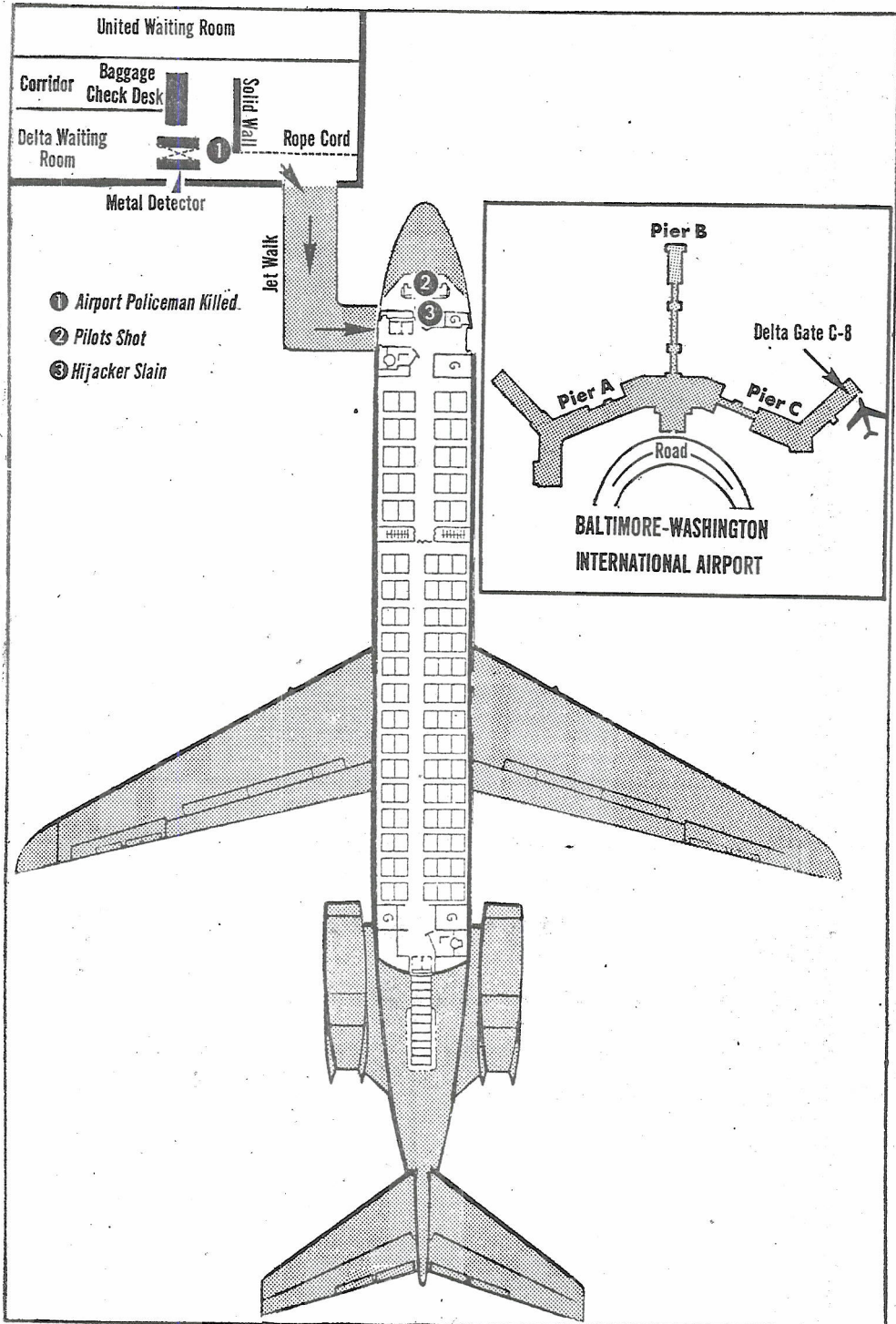
REECE DOUGLAS LOFTIN
... critically wounded



KAREN SMOOT
... injures vertebra



FREDDIE D. JONES
... slain by hijacker



By Joseph P. Mastrangelo—The Washington Post



By Larry Morris—The Washington Post

Delta Airlines employee Gary Bear puts tape over bullet hole in the window of the jetliner's cockpit.

from Ft. Meade, Md. who were called to the airport.

The suitcase was placed on an open stretch of runway and surrounded on two sides by heavy pieces of construction equipment. The bomb disposal experts disarmed the bomb after demolition experts fired several shots into the suitcase.

A Maryland State Police spokesman said the suitcase contained two plastic bags filled with gasoline and connected to a flare detonator. The device was constructed to set off the detonator when the suitcase was opened.

"It was not a professional job but if he had opened it in the air there would have been an explosion and burning and in all probability it would have destroyed the aircraft," said Col. Thomas S. Smith, superintendent of the Maryland state police.

A spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration said that the hijack attempt was the first to be made on an American airliner since Jan. 2, 1973 when a would-be hijacker was talked off a Piedmont Airlines plane at the same airport, International.

"This was an act by one person, a man who must have had a tremendous weight on his mind if he was not mentally disturbed," said special FBI agent Farrow.

The hijacking was the eighth to be tried against a Delta plane, according to a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman. It was also the first one to fail and

the first time a Delta Airlines employee has been killed during a hijack attempt the FAA spokesman said. Police officials praised Troyer, a seven-year veteran on the Anne Arundel Coun-

ty police force, for his cool handling of the situation during the shooting.

An Anne Arundel police spokesman said that Troyer, who is married and has one child, had confronted a gun-

man once before in 1968 during a bank robbery in Glen Burnie. He managed to capture the robber and recover both the gun and the money without firing a shot, the spokesman said.