

NYTimes FEB 23 1974

Would-Be Hijacker Killed After Slaying 2 at Airport

By RICHARD WITKIN

A gunman fatally shot an airport policeman and the co-pilot of a Delta Air Lines jet yesterday while trying to hijack the plane at Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

The 250-pound assailant, who was carrying a gasoline incendiary device, was himself shot to death through a plane window by another policeman. The pilot of the twin-jet DC-9 was seriously wounded.

It was the first attempt to

hijack a United States airliner in the more than 13 months since the start of the Government-ordered procedure requiring all passengers in this country to be screened by electronic weapons detectors.

The dead gunman was identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as Samuel Joseph Byck, born 44 years ago in Philadelphia. There was no immediate clue to whether his motives were purely personal, or whether he might have been carrying out some type of political scheme.

The incendiary device he carried in a briefcase was disarmed later at the airport by an Army disposal team summoned from nearby Fort Meade. It consisted of two gallons of gasoline in plastic containers wired to a "destructing" mechanism.

"It would very definitely have done the job, it would have destroyed the plane to the best of my knowledge," said the F.B.I. investigator in

charge, Thomas H. Farrow of the Baltimore office.

8 Passengers on Board

Eight passengers who had boarded the plane before the burly gunman dashed across the loading bridge from the terminal gate were unhurt in the exchange of fire. But a stewardess hurt her back jumping to the ground through an escape hatch.

The sequence of events began shortly before 7 A.M. as Delta's Flight 5223 was beginning to load passengers for a trip to Atlanta and Columbus, Ga. As related by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and spokesmen for Delta and the airport, formerly known as Friendship, her is what apparently happened:

The would-be hijacker walked down the long airport concourse past the ticket counter and holding area where the first of 49 passengers holding reservations were beginning to board for a scheduled 7:15 departure. An airport policeman, George N. Ramsburg of Howard County, Md., was monitoring the magnetometer as passengers walked past it.

Mr. Byck, doubling back to

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the boarding area, managed to get behind Mr. Ramsburg and shot him fatally in the head with a .22-caliber revolver. Then he dashed onto the plane, circumventing the screening by using an aisle reserved normally for passengers coming off planes.

The sounds of the firing and screams of "he's been shot"



Associated Press

Fred Jones, co-pilot, was killed in plane by man who tried to hijack.

alerted Charles Troyer, an Anne Arundel County policeman who was monitoring a magnetometer at a gate about 75 feet away. He pursued the hijacker, firing a shot. But the hijacker succeeded in getting aboard and having two stewardesses close the door before Officer Troyer could get to him.

On the plane, the F.B.I. agent told newsmen, Mr. Byck pulled a gun from inside his coat, coat, shouted "get back," went to the cockpit, and ordered the two pilots to "fly this plane out of here." When told that the plane could not take off, the gunman fired some warning shots. Then he grabbed a woman passenger and returned with her to the cockpit.

It was evidently at this juncture that the gunman first shot the pilot, Reese Douglas Loftin of Fort Worth, Tex., and the co-pilot, Fred Jones of Dallas. Then the gunman brought the woman back to her seat, forced another woman passenger to accompany him to the cockpit, and again shot the two pilots.

Gunman Is Slain

The shooting was finally ended when Officer Troyer fired four shots through a cabin window killing the gunman.

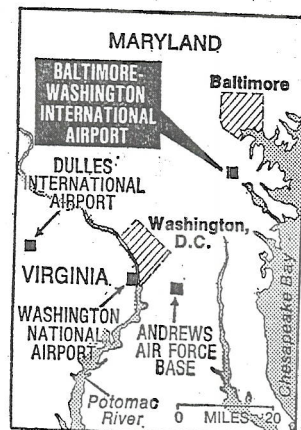
Officer Troyer later told airport officials that after the cabin door closed he had initially descended to ground level and tried to shoot out the plane's tires. But his .38-calibre special would not do the job.

So he raced back to the terminal to retrieve a more powerful .357-magnum gun from the body of his dead colleague and then was able to shoot out two tires. Finally he sped back to the cabin doorway and then shot the hijacker through a window.

First officer Jones, the co-pilot, died during surgery at University Hospital. Captain Loftin was listed in serious condition.

It was not certain at what precise point Officer Troyer shot out the tires. According to the account he gave Melvin Mallonee of the Maryland Aviation Administration, it was shortly after he first heard shots being fired aboard the plane.

Oddly, it was at the same airport, situated eight miles south of Baltimore and about 25 miles north of Washington, that the last attempted hijacking took place in this country.



The New York Times/Feb. 23, 1974

That was on Jan. 2, 1973. The last successful hijacking in the United States took place the previous November when three gunmen took a Southern Airways jet on a harrowing nine-stop 29-hour flight that ended in Cuba.

In the scores of airliner hijackings that have taken place in this country, only one crew member had been killed previously. Others killed included a ticket agent, three passengers and six hijackers.