

Jet Crash Into White House Plotted

By Jack Anderson

The gunman who shot his way aboard a jet airliner last week at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport intended to crash-dive the plane into the White House.

Samuel Joseph Byck described the plan, which he called "Operation Pandora Box," in a tape that he apparently recorded more than a month earlier. He mailed it to us a few hours before the attempted hijacking.

Firing a pistol wildly, he killed two persons before a guard's bullet, fired through the porthole of the airliner door, wounded him. Then he turned his gun on himself.

"Whoever dies in Project Pandora Box," he told us on the tape, "will be directly attributable to Watergate scandals."

The unemployed, 44-year-old Byck planned a kamikaze attack on the White House, ending in a spectacular fiery crash. He brought aboard the airliner a small, black suitcase containing a crude gasoline bomb.

"I will try to get the plane aloft and fly it towards the target area, which will be Washington, D.C., the capital of the most powerful wealthiest nation of the world," he related in a matter-of-fact voice.

"By guise, threats or trickery, I hope to force the pilot to buzz the White House—I mean, sort of dive towards the White House. When the plane is in this

position, I will shoot the pilot and then in the last few minutes try to steer the plane into the target, which is the White House."

President Nixon stayed in the White House on George Washington's birthday, the day of the hijacking attempt. The previous weekend, an Army helicopter maintenance man stole an Army chopper and after a wild, two-hour joy ride, headed straight for the White House. The guards had nothing but shotguns to stop the chopper as it bore down on them and skidded safely to a stop on the White House lawn.

Weeks before the helicopter episode, Byck planned his bizarre suicide attack upon the White House. Alone in his room in northeast Philadelphia, he began recording his scheme on Jan. 14 and concluded the hour-long tape on Jan. 23.

"I don't know what you can do with it," he recorded, "but it'll be a tape, and there won't be any 18-minute inoperative beeps."

We played excerpts for his former wife, who divorced him last September. "That's him," she said. "That's the way he talks whether he was going to do this (hijack attempt) or going to a baseball game." Others who knew Byck also agreed it was his voice.

He declared on the tape that the suicide mission would be "a very difficult task for me for the simple reason that I have an abnormal fear of death ... because

I believe in no God, no Supreme Being, no religion, no nothing ... I don't look forward to dying. I love life, I'm heavy, I'm fat, I like to eat, and I'm not suicidal.

"But I'm doing this," he said, "to prove the point that one man can make a difference if his mind and his willpower is strong enough ..."

He said he was 60 to 70 pounds overweight, with a bad back. "And I'm about to undertake a James Bond, 007-type operation, Operation Pandora Box, where you have to be skinny and slinky and willowy and," he chuckled, "I'm not anything like that."

"But I suspect that I can come off with an element of surprise if I can keep my cool. And I suspect that my appearance may work to my advantage."

Byck explained that he intended to combine two dramatic deeds—"that of skyjacking a commercial airliner" and "that of the kamikaza pilots."

"By combining these two ideas," he said, "I devised the diabolical Pandora Box. Once opened the Pandora Box can never be closed. And I intend to do my damndest to open up the Pandora Box."

He insisted he was quite sane. "Those whom the gods wish to destroy," he recited, "they first make mad. That's from Euripides. And I know that I'm not mad. I'm a manic-depressive, as is eight to ten million other fine fellow Americans. I go to a psychiatrist every four or five weeks, which I missed the last

visit by the way, and I'm on lithium carbonate, which is a stabilizing drug that levels off my highs and lows."

He spoke of "wars, genocide, rape, arson" and added: "So those who claim that I'm mad, let them look very closely at themselves in the mirror; let them look very closely at what they have created."

The reason for his desperate deed, he said, was "frustration when you are suddenly aware ... that this government cannot correct its mistakes, that this government is a government of cover-up rather than exposure."

"There's more crooks than good ones in Washington ... They are all con artists, making deals, wheeling, dealing, money in the pocket, money under the table, anything for a buck."

Byck stressed that he was planning his dive upon the White House entirely alone and that he hoped to carry it out without hurting anyone except himself and the pilot. "I hope upon hope," he said, "that I have the courage to go through with it ..."

"I also hope that ... I am not taken, apprehended or overcome or wounded. I want to come out of this dead—totally dead. Win, lose or draw, I don't want to be caged up and wait for a trial. I want to be dead. I suspect that I will be riddled full of bullets if I'm not successful, and I suspect that if Pandora Box is successful, that I will die in a fiery airplane crash."

© 1974, United Feature Syndicate, Inc.