

## HIJACKER TRIPPED A METAL SENSOR

Bag Searched, But No Gun  
Was Found at La Guardia

—By ROBERT LINDSEY

The man who hijacked a Trans World Airlines jetliner at La Guardia Airport yesterday had aroused the suspicions of airline employees enough to make them search a small bag he was carrying aboard the plane. But no weapon was found, so the line's agents let him board the aircraft.

A small blue signal light on a metal-sensing antihijacking device was tripped when the passenger, who was identified last night as Richard A. Obergfell, walked in a corridor toward the aircraft.

Airline agents said the passenger showed several unspecified behavior traits that in the past had been common to many hijackers.

Since he fell within what airline security officers call the "hijacker behavioral profile," and the metal-sensing alarm was tripped, the man was stopped and questioned by an airline agent.

The passenger was not searched physically before boarding, but the agent asked him to open his coat so he could see whether any weapons were concealed. None was observed. His carry-on luggage was inspected, however.

"We found several [metal] items in the bag that could have tripped the detection device, so he was let through," a T.W.A. spokesman said. He said the airline did not have the authority to frisk passengers physically. But such searches are made at some airports by Federal agents.

The airline official said it was not known whether the gun used by the hijacker was concealed on his body when he

entered the aircraft or whether he somehow acquired it after passing through the gate.

Yesterday's hijacking was the latest indication that the combined Federal and airline industry program to prevent hijackings has not been able to stop the crime.

### 2 Features in Program

One facet of the program is the installation of the metal-sensing devices—called "magnetometers"—at airport boarding gates and the screening of passengers with the behavioral profile that has been developed by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The second feature of the program is the assigning of armed guards—called "skymarshals"—on certain planes to nip any hijackings that start aboard the aircraft.

Many airline security officers have been skeptical about use of the skymarshals for safety reasons. There has been some concern that innocent passengers might be injured if there were a shoot-out aboard a plane or if the threat of a guard prompted a hijacker to take a step that might result in the loss of an aircraft.

The negative view seemed to be summarized by this comment from an executive of a major airline yesterday: "It's really impossible to put a guy on every flight. It would cost too damn much."

The skymarshal program grew out of last fall's hijacking of four jetliners to Jordan and Egypt by Palestinian guerrillas during the Middle East crisis. It was shortly after that wave of hijackings that the Nixon Administration authorized creation of the skymarshal force. There are now about 1,200 Treasury Department agents assigned to the force.

Government officials connected with the Skymarshal program have defended it strongly, saying that the wide publicity given to the possibility that armed guards will be on planes has probably deterred many would-be hijackers.

Yesterday's hijacking was the 15th attempt to commandeer a United States airliner this year. In 1970, up to the same date, there had been 11 attempts.

Eight of the attempts this year have been successful. Last year at this time, there had been six successful hijackings.