

*Jack Anderson and Les Whitten*

## Terrorists and Airports

When Britain moved tanks around London's Heathrow airport to protect Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, word leaked out that Arab terrorists had planned to kill him in order to abort Mideast peace efforts. But the leaks told only a fraction of the story.

Now, a warning to the House Commerce Committee by Rep. John Murphy (D-N.Y.), and a "need-to-know-only" CIA alert to the White House and other agencies, explain the Kissinger danger and harbinger new troubles for the great world air terminals.

A few days ago, Murphy spoke in confidence with Federal Aviation Administration special agents who insisted a "Heathrow-type" incident had actually been planned in the United States. With the agents' consent, Murphy took the matter to his chairman, Rep. Harley Staggers (D-W.Va.).

"Intelligence (the FAA agents) have received indicates that terrorists in the United States have plans to park an automobile at the end of the runway of a major U.S. airport and fire one of these rockets right up the tailpipe of a 747 as it takes off," Murphy relayed to Staggers in a long private note.

"These rockets," as it turns out, were precisely the same kind of SA-7 "Strella" shoulder-fired missiles that had alarmed the British into their extraordinary precautions at Heathrow.

As we have now discovered, the CIA and its British counterparts had learned from informants that Arab terrorists planned to site a car at the end of a Heathrow runway and zoom a lightweight, but lethal rocket up the jet pipe of Kissinger's plane. The purpose, of course, was to wreck the modest Israeli-Egypt agreement then being worked out by the peripatetic Secretary of State. This would create the kind of whirlwind in the Mideast that the terrorists reap so well.

As soon as the CIA picked up the intelligence, it worked with other agencies, particularly the FAA, to get out all-points warnings that Strellas were in Arab hands.

"It is probable," began the cautionary wire sent on an internal circuit to the White House situation room, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the FBI, the Secret Service and the State Department, "that the Fedayeen possess . . . Soviet SA-7 (Strella) ground to air missiles."

Some of the 30-pound weapons had already been "found by Italian Police in possession of Fedayeen terrorists near Rome's international airport (on) 5 September," the wire went on.

"In view of demonstrated capability of Fedayeen to operate worldwide, (this) information . . . is being furnished by United States government on a confidential and need-to-know basis . . ."

The FAA retransmitted the information to foreign security officials, foreign airlines and the U.S. Air Transport Association. In a careful technical evaluation of the Strella's danger, the message said the weapon had been developed by the Soviets as an infantryman's missile against aircraft flying below 10,000 feet.

The FAA-CIA warning told how two men, one carrying a launcher, the other lugging an extra round, can set up, fire and escape in less than a minute. "Preparing the missile to fire, acquiring the target and firing the missile requires 10 to 20 seconds," said the

wire. "The person launching the missile may then leave the area."

Little care is needed in aiming. The missile has a heat-seeking infrared homing system that draws the rocket to heat as surely as iron filings are drawn to a magnet. The system works at ranges up to almost three miles, permitting the terrorists to waylay the plane hundreds of yards from the airport, particularly when the jet makes a slow climb.

The confidential message only hinted at an added threat of Strellas in the hands of reckless and unconscionable terrorists. If the rocket misses the tailpipe of a plane, it "might be diverted by alternate sources of heat." This means that it could plunge down the smokestack of a school, a factory or any other building nearby.

"At this point, there are no known countermeasures for these missiles which are both inexpensive and highly effective," warned the message. And, increasingly, the Strellas are being matched by other nations producing anti-aircraft rocket weapons for their infantrymen.

The American warning, coupled with intelligence gathered by West German, Dutch, Belgian and British security networks, has led to a drastic change in protection around major air terminals.

"While the British display was played up in the press," Murphy wrote, "it is not generally known that the original deployment of mass military forces to deter missile bearing terrorists occurred at Brussels Airport when the Belgian government learned of the presence of Palestinian Arabs passing through the facility."

"Belgian intelligence justified the mass alert on the basis of information that the Arabs had in their possession Soviet SA-7 shoulder-launched surface-to-air launchers and missiles."

As a result of the international scare, U.S. troops and German security men with submachine guns are guarding the Frankfurt airport, and "patrolling flight paths in armored vehicles some distance from the airport," Murphy said. Troops are also on guard at the Amsterdam airport believed to be a major target of the terrorists "because of (the Netherlands') political support of Israel."

The CIA and American air security experts recommend a limit on slow climbs and descents and on low flights "over areas difficult to surveil. Local security forces may reduce the threats . . . by securing the area (for about three miles) each side of . . . the approach, takeoff and climbout areas of active runways . . ."

If there is an advance warning, the aircraft under attack can "jettison flares to attract the heat-seeking missiles." This, of course, could mean the rockets will then mindlessly find a new target if they miss both plane and flares.

While Murphy and others have introduced bills to bolster security at U.S. airports, experts we have talked with say the solution must be political, not technical. New legislation would help, say these experts, but until the Arab lands refuse hospitality to mass murderers, there is no protection but prayer, good luck or staying away from airports.