

'Interference Thwarted Release'

Pilots Group Blasts FBI in Hijack

Washington

The Air Line Pilots Association charged yesterday that FBI interference thwarted three agreements between the pilot of a Southern Airways jetliner and its hijackers last weekend to release the 27 passengers before a final emergency landing in Havana.

The pilots association also yesterday threatened to call another worldwide air serv-

ice strike in protest of governmental inaction against hijackers.

Captain J. J. O'Donnell, president of the 35,000-member Pilots and Flight Attendants' Union, said Bill Haas, pilot of the Southern DC-9, told him he had persuaded the hijackers to free the passengers at three stops — Chattanooga Tenn.; Orlando, Fla., and Key West.

But the three air pirates

changed their minds when they spotted police carrying guns at Key West and Chattanooga, O'Donnell said.

And at Orlando, "the pilot was very close to the time when he could let the passengers off and in the middle of the talks the FBI shot out the tires of the plane," he said.

O'Donnell told a news conference that "only a miracle" prevented the 28-hour flight under gunpoint from ending "in a ball of flame."

Acting FBI director L. Patrick Gray said that with airline officials' concurrence he personally ordered the jet's tires shot out just before Haas successfully took off from Orlando, Sunday. The plane landed a short time later on a foam-covered runway at the Jose Marti airport in Havana, where the hijackers were taken into custody and the passengers and crew of four were freed.

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