

A HISTORY OF SUICIDAL HIJACKS

Had the industry ever contemplated the possibility of hijackers intentionally killing themselves as part of their action plan? It is a question that has been asked of the aviation security fraternity by the world's media time and time again in recent weeks. Whilst the scale of the September 11th attacks shocked us all, Philip Baum reports that this was not the first time that hijackers had selected aviation as a journey to the grave.

There have been two previous incidents of civilian airliners being hijacked and the crew murdered before the hijackers intentionally crashed the aircraft. And both these incidents took place in the United States.

The most recent incident took place on 7 December 1987 when David Burke hijacked a Pacific Southwest Airlines flight en route from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Using a .44 calibre Smith & Wesson, Burke shot all three members of cabin crew before entering the cockpit and executing the two pilots before turning his weapon on himself. 43 passengers and crew were to die when the Bae 146-200 impacted with the ground at Paso Robles, California.

The motive was, however, not terrorism. Burke had a grudge. He had been an employee of Pacific Southwest, but had been fired for stealing from petty cash. His former boss, Ray Thomson, was a passenger on the doomed flight. Burke may still have been in possession of an airport ID which would, at that time, have exempted him from screening.

Another desperate, disturbed individual hijacked another flight bound for San Francisco on 7 May 1964. This time 44 passengers and crew were to perish aboard a Pacific Air Lines Fairchild F-27 when the hijacker shot both pilots, using a .357

Magnum, and the aircraft crashed near Oakland, California.

Francisco Gonzales had taken out two insurance policies valued at \$105,000 in San Francisco the day before the attack, before flying to Reno for his final night.

These incidents started as hijacks, but there have also been other successful suicidal attacks on civil aviation.

In 1957 Saul Binstock blew himself up on board a Western Air Lines flight in the Californian skies. Binstock had taken out a life insurance policy before his flight from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. The aircraft landed safely.

In 1960 a National Airlines DC-6 flight crashed in Bolivia, North Carolina killing all 34 on board. The perpetrator this time was Julian Frank, a lawyer who had taken out a \$1m life insurance policy despite having financial difficulties. His body also bore explosive residue.

In 1962 another insurance seeking passenger detonated a bomb on board a Continental B-707 heading for Kansas from Chicago. All 45 passengers were killed when the aircraft hit the ground in Missouri.

Finally, and for once outside the USA, a Canadian Pacific Air Lines flight en route from Vancouver to Prince George crashed in 100 Mile House, British Columbia killing all 52 passengers and crew. Insurance was believed to be the motive. ☺



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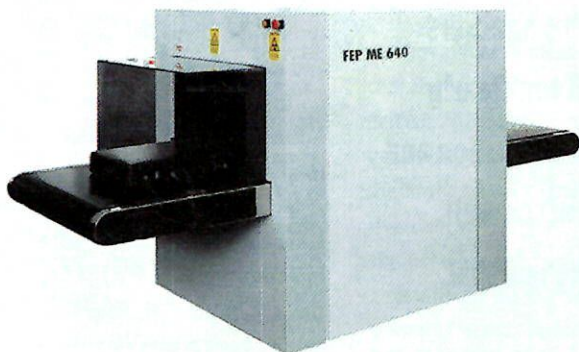


IMAGE OF BAGGAGE WITH PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE AND DRUGS OUTLINED RESPECTIVELY IN RED AND YELLOW



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