

N-C Dec 29/71 ✓

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L.F. T.B. - Crime - Hijacking

Hijacker Now Believed To Be William Ponder

Police Have Description

Police in Thunder Bay are now investigating a man they believe was the hijacker who took a Thunder Bay - Toronto Air Canada DC-9 jet flight to Cuba the day after Christmas.

Chief Onni Harty said today a man believed to be William Paul Ponder, 24, of New York City, checked into the Shoreline Motor Hotel Christmas night at about 11.30 p.m.

The man left the hotel about 4 p.m. Dec. 26, went to the airport in a taxi and apparently boarded the plane for the supertime flight to Toronto.

Shortly before the descent to Toronto, a man produced a

pistol and a hand grenade and commandeered the jet to Havana after allowing the plane's 83 passengers to disembark at Toronto International airport. They were unaware of what had happened.

The man is described as being a negro, neat, well-dressed and well-spoken.

He sat in the rear seat of the taxi which took him to the airport and said very little to the driver.

Police say they are checking his background fully and are in touch with law officials in New York in connection with Mr. Ponder.

Challenged On Detectors

OTTAWA (CP) — In the wake of the first successful hijacking of a Canadian jet, Transport Minister Don Jamieson was the target Tuesday for a welter of Commons charges and questions.

When the dust had settled, the minister, backed by the Liberal majority, had withstood a Conservative motion challenging his veracity and stuck to his guns about the existence and operation of such devices as metal detectors to screen passenger baggage at Canadian airports.

There are such devices in use, Mr. Jamieson said, repeating in essence a statement he made to the House in November, but he would not say how many or where because this could endanger the travelling public.

An Air Canada official here said today that there is no metal detector functioning at Thunder Bay Airport. However, he added, such a device could "arrive at any time."

An American armed with a revolver and grenades pulled Canada's first successful hijacking Sunday, taking an Air Canada DC-9 to Cuba.

James A. McGrath (PC—St. John's East) claimed information in his possession showed that, contrary to Mr. Jamieson's statement to the House Nov. 18, no protective devices were in operation at Canadian airports.

CALLED FOR STATEMENT

The motion called on the minister to make a statement today clarifying the situation and the doubts they raised about his "veracity and competence."

It needed unanimous consent and this was vociferously denied by the Liberals.

Jack Horner (PC—Crowfoot) then made a motion that the House drop further business and rise until today, when the minister would have a chance to "set the record straight."

To Liberal hoots, the Conservatives forced a formal vote on this one.

They were swamped 108 to 41,

the 33 Conservatives present getting support only from seven Social Credit members and John Skoberg (NDP—Moose Jaw) while the 92 Liberals present were backed by 15 NDP members and an Independent.

Standing in the 264-seat Commons: Liberal 150, Conservatives 71, NDP 25, Social Credit 13, Independent two, Independent Liberal one, vacant two.

When the daily question period was on, Mr. McGrath returned to the hijack question.

In asking one question, he said the hijacker claimed he came to Canada to seize a plane because it was easier to do it here than in the United States.

Liberal MPs pressed Mr. McGrath to name his sources of information.

Refusing to name his sources, Mr. McGrath pressed Mr. Jamieson to say how many screening devices are in use and where.