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Triple hijack drama ends in Cuban airport

From Reuter and AFP

HAVANA — The hijacking of three Venezuelan jets by armed men on Monday apparently ended here yesterday with the hijackers in custody and more than 100 passengers escorted to Havana, airport sources said.

All passengers and crew members from the three planes have been freed, diplomatic sources said.

Among the passengers released were one Briton, three West Germans and one Austrian. The other passengers were believed to be Venezuelan.

The hijackers claimed to belong to an "international solidarity commando." They were demanding the release of 23 political prisoners held in Venezuela and a \$10-million ransom, the sources added. The demands were made after the release of the passengers and crew.

The planes belonging to the Aeropostal and Avensa airlines were taken to a secluded part of the airport and security men went to the area, the source said.

The Avensa Boeing 727 was the last

to pull up next to two the Aeropostal DC-9's after flights from Panama City.

The planes took off with about 140 people on board, from Panama City where they had landed for refuelling and food supplies yesterday morning. The hijackers were believed to be members of the Venezuelan leftist Red Flag movement.

The three aircraft were seized in flight Monday shortly after taking off from the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, in an apparently concerted action by a dozen leftists.

All three planes had set off on domestic flights but were diverted to the Colombian Caribbean port of Barranquilla.

Neither the Cuban Government nor Cuban officials have made any public statement concerning the hijacking.

In Caracas, the Venezuelan Government said it rejected the leftists' demands but Interior Minister Rafael Anres Montes de Oca would not reveal to journalists what demands they had made.

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