

facts - thr
yonkers, n.y 10710 (ignore above number)

"Times Mag."

Three passenger planes hijacked in Venezuela end up in Cuba in December 1984

facts - three passenger planes taken over shortly after taking off in caracas, a avensa airline boeing 727 and two aeropostal airline dc-9-50's. groups aboard each had different battle name - one commando revolucionario puerto riqueno, other commando revolucionario haitiano and other, commando revolucionario el salvadoreno. this is what led to confusion about nationalistic of hijackers but pilots and most passengers believe they were venezuelan.

all three planes forced to go to baranquilla (colombia) and after an all day stay took off for different parts - one to honduras, another to el salvador and another to guatemala. treatment by authorities in all these places was criticised by crew and passengers (see below)

the planes then flew to panama. they had asked for ten million dollars from the venezuelan government and release of political prisoners. in panama, the venezuelan ambassador said he would not negotiate.

the pplanes then took off without announcing destination and flew to havana. the hijackers were taken into custody by cuban security forces and the passengers spent the night at the triton hotel and took advantage of a cuban government offer to tour havana and see the lively show at the tropicana night club. the following day the three planes left with their 102 passengers and crew (women and children had been let off, before coming to cuba) for return flight to venezuela.

-- coming to havana --

roger smith, british engineer who works in venezuela:
+we had been told we were flying to mexico. i was a bit shocked when i heard we were near cuba. but we had a very good reception and were treated very well.+

... argentinian (computer systems analyst)
+from the beginning i wanted the plane to go to nicaragua or
cuba because i knew there wouldn't be any problem there and if the
hijackers didn't have problems we wouldn't either.+

frank hendel -pilot of avensa beeing 727 -- +when we
were approaching cuba we contacted the control tower and
comandante 10 told them that a puerto rican revolutionary group
had taken over the plane and the cubans gave it authority to land.+

-----paula padron (stewardess on avensa flight)--when i opened
the rear door at instruction of comandante 10, armed cuban security
men were there. comandante 10 told them they would have to wait
until another plane carrying their chief, comandante 9,
landed. when it did land, they handed over their weapons and
granadss to the cubans and were taken into custody very
peacefully.+

-- on night of dec 8 cuban government issued a statment that said
hijackers were in custody and would be tried +by competent
tribunals+ the statement said that the hijackers had never planned
to go to cuba but wwere forced to do so because of the

---in past hijackers had spent terms in cuban jails or
halfway houses in case of many of the black hijackers during the
sixties. however, last two groups of hijackers of u.s. passenger
planes were extradited to u.s. among cubans one could here
statements upon larning of the three venezuelan hijacked planes like
+its a cia provocation to involve cuba and nicaragua+

--the hijackers handed out political propaganda and armbands
which said: +el salvador vencera (el salvador will win) with
the insignia of the farabundo martin front for national libearation
(fmnl) of el salvador. (that's marti - not martin above)..the
cuban newspaper reported that the fmnl had categorically denied it
had anything to do with the hijackings.

- ----general criticism of attitude of governments of colombia,
el salvador, guatemala and honduras for treatment of hijacked planes.

---frank hendel -avensa pilot) +colombia was bad but
guatemal was even worse. colombians used delaying tactics and were
there for eleven hours. it was hot, the passengers were nervous
and the hiajcers were tense. they did not even send us water and
food and they refused to fuel the plane as demanded by the hijackers.
they finally acceded but their conduct was wrong. the same thing
happened when we landed in guatemala.+

...the ... for ... panamericana (passenger aboard avensa 727) -in guatemala the hijackers got tense when 3 no fuel was provided. they were ready to explode their granades-- they had even taken out the pins (safety devices). Luckily the guatemalans finally sent out fuel.+

jose vidal - captain (pilot) of one of the aeropostal planes -- +i differe with the attitude of the colombian authorities. they used delaying tactics all the time. they refused fuel, water for the pasengers, food. it was hot and the hijakcers were getting jumpy. finally they acceeded and were took off from there almost nine and a half hours after we had landed. then in honduras, the authorities were even worse. they were intransigence, inhuman and insensitive. they told us =+we dont have fuel. the airstrip is clear. leave+

=-roger smith (british engineer in venezuela and passenger) +in elsalvador several trucks full of soldiers with automatic weapons drove out towards plane when it landed. one truck stopped on airstrip in front of plane and soldier jumped out of second truck. the hijackers order thep plane to take off. it got off barely on one engine and almost hit the army truck --a close shave+ ++the hijackers++

---roger smith (see above) -- they wore masks or bandanas and white gloves. they developed a good relationship with most of the people on the plane expecially the younger guys. they share their cigarettes and passed around coffee.+

---giovanni perna (venezuelan)==they were disciplined and well behaved.+

elio huama (peruvian) == the conducted themselves +marvellously and with discipline.+

engineer jose cardenas (venezuelan :a passenger) +i have no complaints about their conduct but in reality they are locos who put the lives of dozens of people indanger (this was sentiment of many)+

--paula padron .stewardess (see above) --comandante 10 the head of the commando puerto riqueno had granades and at one point seemed ready to give the order to blow them up but said on intercom system later : +perphas i wouldn have done it because i see that the people are innocent and victims of circumstance+ (he told her that--not clear if he said it on intercom)

--motives+++

roger smith thinks they were mainly out for publicity for their cause +they)e) against the present v)e)elan policy of supporting the military junta in el salvador and were anti american for the same reason. they also spoke out for puerto rican independence and against the regime in haiti.+ d

--on leaving cuba, many of the passengers and crew carried off duty free cigars and cuban rum.

end end end. hope this is useful ..if want other things let me know. /cheers to bernie.

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