

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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SECURITY INFORMATION

2003

18 May 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR

SUBJECT: Arrest by Panama National Police of American Fliers

1. Mr. [] telephoned this afternoon to report that on Armed Forces Day the Panama National Police arrested two American fliers who apparently had made an unauthorized landing at Albrook Field.
2. The fliers, James Alford HILLIARD and Marion Murrell COOPER by name, had papers which, upon examination, were not in order. As a result, they are presently in jail in Panama City.
3. In what was quite evidently a veiled attempt to relay a message, Mr. [] stated that one of the fliers, COOPER, seemed to be slightly irrational since, in his statement to the Panama National Police, he asserted that "All Hell was about to break loose up above." By this I assume he meant in one of the small countries north of here.
4. It was also determined by the Panama National Police that COOPER has been employed by the United Fruit Company and that he has been flying arms and ammunition into one of the afore mentioned countries.
5. [] stated that nothing of note was learned from HILLIARD, but that he intends to follow through regarding this matter and that he will give us a report in writing confirming the above and any subsequent information he may obtain.

SECURITY INFORMATION

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Two US Flyers Are Arrested

In Panama

Accuse Pair Of Violating Immigration, Aviation Regulations

The Honduran government has requested the extradition of two young American flyers who are being held by the Panama Police for violation of immigration regulations, it was disclosed last night.

The pair arrived in Paitilla Airport last Saturday afternoon. They are Marion Cooper, 26, and James A. Hilliard, 21.

The Panama Police said they are wanted in Honduras in connection with the purchase of spare airplane parts which they used to repair their Ercoupe aircraft.

Police also reported that Cooper and Hilliard landed at Santiago, in Veraguas Province, where they told a police detachment at the airport that they were forced down because of lack of fuel. They were furnished gasoline and flew then to Albrook Air Force Base.

According to the police reports, the pair were told to get bills for the fare to Panama.

The Ercoupe aircraft landed next at Paitilla and they were ordered held because they lacked immigration papers and had violated the aeronautics regulations of Panama.

They were released on their own recognizance, however, until Monday. When they reported to police headquarters yesterday, the two young Americans were picked up again and placed at the orders of immigration authorities.

Cooper and Hilliard claimed that they carried visas from Honduras to Guatemala, but that they had lost their way while in flight.