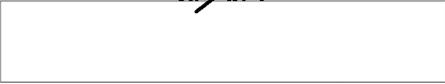


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9 March 1977

ARTICLES

Plea Bargaining by TWA Hijacker

On 2 March Mark Vlasik, a Croation-American, pleaded guilty in a New York state court to attempted kidnaping. He is one of five hijackers who seized control of a New York-to-Chicago Trans World Airlines jet on 10 September and forced it to fly to Paris. (See the 14 September 1976 issue.)

While in control of the flight, the hijackers directed police to a bomb placed in a locker in Grand Central Station. A bomb squad officer was killed and three other policemen were severely injured when the device went off as they were trying to dispose of it. The state of New York charged the five terrorists with murder, kidnap and assault; this indictment carries a maximum penalty of death. Vlasik's plea to the lesser charge of attempted kidnaping makes him liable to a prison term of between six and eighteen years.

Meanwhile, a controversy has developed over the handling of the next phase of the case. Federal and New York prosecutors agreed in February that the state would try the hijackers before they faced Federal charges. Last week the New York State Supreme Court set 7 March as the date for the beginning of the trial. The United States Attorney contended, however, that New York had taken too long in starting the trial and as a result the agreement between prosecutors was void. As now scheduled, the five hijackers will appear in Federal Court on 22 March, where they will be charged with air piracy.



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Weekly Situation Report
on
International Terrorism

APPROVED FOR
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9 March 1977

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