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Alexander Rorke
... Class A mystery.

Rorke Mystery Heightens

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The fate of Anti-Castro Raider Alexander I. Rorke Jr., has become a class A mystery, U.S. aviation officials said Saturday.

Art Eno, area coordinator for the Federal Aviation Agency here, said no trace has been found of the South Florida adventurer, his pilot Geoffrey Sullivan, or their plane since they left Cozumel, Mexico, Sept. 25 — presumably bound for Honduras.

Three possibilities have been suggested: a crash on land or sea, a deliberate secret flight to an unknown destination, or abduction.

Rorke, 36, and Sullivan, 28 — both of whom claimed to have staged raids on Castro's Cuba — rented a twin engine plane Sept. 24 in Fort Lauderdale and took off.

They landed on Cozumel — an island off Yucatan — later in the day. After an overnight stay they filed a flight plan to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and vanished.

Eno said a message from the Cozumel airport indicated the fliers may have had mechanical difficulty there.

The stop was referred to as a communication.

"But that would have been a perfect place for them to refuel," said Eno.

Eno pointed out that the route to Tegucigalpa is over a wide stretch of the Caribbean, and then over mountains soaring to 8,000 feet.

At first, it was thought that Rorke and Sullivan might have used Cozumel as a jumping off place for a raid on Cuba.

"We checked with Havana," said Eno, "and came up with a negative.

"We talked to every single country possible, and got nothing. There has been all sorts of conjecture."

He said Rorke's uncle, William Rorke, had been in to talk to him, and suggested his nephew may have been abducted. The uncle, of New York City, refused to discuss the possibility with newsmen.

Rorke is known to have been a thorn in the side of Castro and Cuba. He claimed to have made a raid on a Cuban oil refinery in May. Subsequently his airplane, a twin engine Beechcraft, was confiscated by the federal government.

His boat, the 36-foot Violynn III, also was confiscated after it was found in British waters with 17 anti-Castro raiders on board.

He and Sullivan were warned by the U.S. in September to cease their hit-run tactics against Cuba.

Friends said the ill-fated trip was a legitimate business venture, to inquire about a lobster hauling operation from Panama.

In Hollywood, Rorke's wife — mother of their three children — said he was expected back by Sept. 29 at the latest.

Eno said the search had been turned over to the Coast Guard.

"Rorke? Who's he?" asked the phone operator at Coast Guard Search and Rescue.

It was explained that he was the object of a search.

"Oh," said the man. "No we didn't see anything."

Alexander I. Rorke Jr.
Geoffrey Sullivan
SULLIVAN

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