

LOG 774

BAS-6

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 P.M., E.D.T., OCTOBER 7, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: October 7, 1976

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Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-76-132 and 133

On July 16, 1976, a serious incident which involved a violent mental patient occurred on Eastern Airlines Flight 948, a Lockheed L-1011. The incident seriously jeopardized the safety of the passengers on board the aircraft. The National Transportation Safety Board believes that action should be taken to prevent similar incidents in the future.

In this case, a mental patient, who was accompanied by two escorts, boarded at San Juan, Puerto Rico, without the knowledge of the gate agent or the aircraft crew. During flight, the patient was escorted to one of the lavatories. A young boy, who already occupied the lavatory, had failed to lock the door; he was not observed by the escort and was subsequently attacked by the mental patient.

Since there is no Federal requirement that an air carrier be notified of the carriage of a mental patient, the only persons who were aware that the patient had boarded the aircraft were members of the airport security force; they were aware of the situation because the patient's escorts possessed handcuffs and security restraints.

Because airline personnel were not notified in advance about the patient, they could not refuse permission to board or, if permission was granted, they could not brief the patient's escorts on procedures to follow while on the aircraft. While the attack on the child might have been difficult to prevent, the Board believes that passenger safety was compromised by the failure to notify the crew regarding this patient.

The Board is aware of the regulations and Advisory Circular 121-18 (Aviation Security - Carriage of Weapons and Escorted Persons), which require advance notification of the air carrier. It is also aware that

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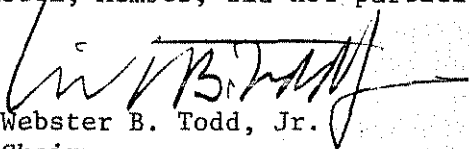
FAA is considering various actions to prevent a recurrence of such an incident. However, the Board believes that rulemaking action is needed to require advance notification and safety precautions similar to those in 14 CFR 121.584 so that aircraft crewmembers are aware that permission to board is being requested for a passenger who could endanger the safety of other passengers.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Amend 14 CFR 121.584 to include provisions relevant to carriage of mental patients who are potentially dangerous to themselves or to others. These provisions should include the requirement that the mental patient be accompanied by a qualified medical attendant. (Class II -- Priority Followup) (A-76-132)

Amend Advisory Circular 121-18 to provide guidance to organizations and persons responsible for the transportation of mental patients with regard to the actions necessary and the responsibilities involved in escorting such persons. (Class II -- Priority Followup) (A-76-133)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations. HOGUE, Member, did not participate.

By:   
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.