

Kuwaiti airliner seized, chief's return sought

United Press International BEIRUT, Lebanon—Twelve hijackers armed with sub-machine guns stormed a Kuwaiti airliner on a Beirut Airport runway Wednesday and took 105 passengers and crew hostage, officials said.

The hijackers are demanding the release of a Moslem religious leader from Libya.

Officials said the gunmen drove up to the plane in a black Mercedes. Four ran to the plane and boarded it, firing automatic weapons, while the other eight took up positions around the plane.

Initial reports said some of the passengers escaped during the takeover.

The Kuwait Airways Boeing 707 was on a scheduled flight from the Libyan capital of Tripoli to Kuwait, with a refueling stop in Beirut, when it was seized.

Three of the hostages were reportedly wounded in the takeover and the passengers were believed to include George Hawi, the head of the Lebanese Communist Party, and a number of Algerian diplomats.

An official said the hijackers ordered the plane to be refueled, but they did not say where they wanted to have it flown.

Officials said the gunmen identified themselves as "the Sons of Imam Musa Sadr." Sadr was the leader of Lebanon's Shiite Moslems before he disappeared on a visit to Libya in August 1978.

Sadr launched "the Movement of the Underprivileged" to help Lebanon's Shiites—a majority in the country but traditionally the poorest.

Libya maintains that Sadr left the country at the end of an official visit and flew to Rome. Ita-

lian authorities earlier this month closed an investigation into his disappearance by ruling that he never arrived in Italy.

Since he disappeared, seven planes, including the Kuwaiti plane, have been commandeered by hijackers demanding his release.

Negotiating with the hijackers were Khalil Hafez, the commander-in-chief of the airport, and Marwan Hamadi, Lebanese tourism minister.

Two and a half hours after the plane landed, the hijackers fired one shot at the control tower and threatened to shoot "something bigger" unless the cars drove off.

The pilot of the plane, parked little more than 500 yards from the main terminal building, told the control tower: "I hope they cooperate pretty darn quickly, or else we're finished."



Unicycling into the sunset

photo by Eric Neidinger

Teresa Corte, a junior business management major from Pearlland, and Steve Dinning, an engineering technology major from Houston, ride unicycles over Wellborn Road. Both are members of the unicycle club.

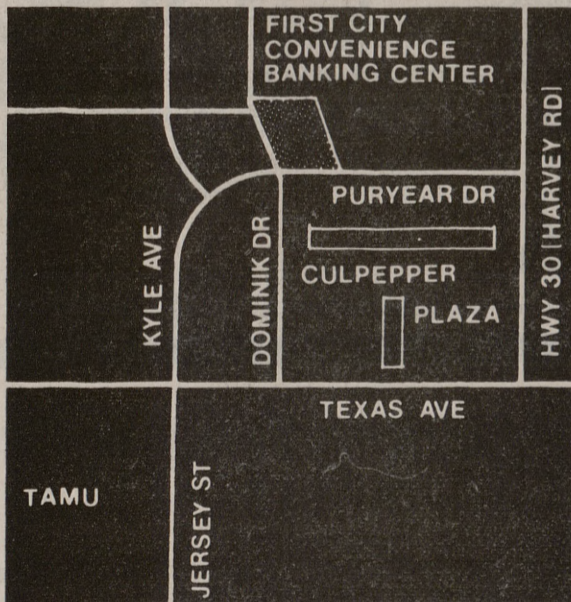
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Saudis resisting OPEC pressure to cut production

United Press International LONDON — Saudi Arabia apparently is resisting calls for an emergency weekend meeting of OPEC despite predictions of further drops in oil prices, Western oil executives say.

Western and Japanese oil executives in London said prices would remain under pressure as long as leading oil producers in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries are divided on whether production should be cut.

Saudi Arabia, the largest exporter, reportedly is opposed to any production cut. Libya is most outspoken in demanding that output be curtailed to check the current drop in prices.

"There is so much oil and just so much demand for it, these prices cannot stay whether OPEC meets or not," said a Western oil industry source who

asked not to be named.

The next scheduled talks are May 20 in Quito, Ecuador, but oil executives said the glut could worsen by then and further depress world prices.

Meanwhile, Iran, hard pressed for cash to finance its war with Iraq, cut its crude oil prices for the third time in a month, Western and Japanese sources said. A spokesman for the Iranian Oil ministry in Tehran denied the latest \$2 price reduction.

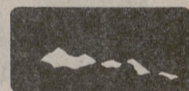
But the sources said Iranian oil was being offered at \$30.20 for light crude and \$28.30 for heavy crude, and the move would lower prices on the market even though Iran now exports only about 500,000 barrels a day.

"As it is, this cut just goes to show what strain the market is under right now," one executive said.

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