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WORLD

Eight hostages freed from plane

STANSTED, England (AP) — Hijackers released eight hostages today from an Afghan passenger airliner that was forced across Central Asia and Europe before landing in Stansted Airport outside London.

The hostages were released in two groups, several hours apart. The eight released were three men, three women and two children, police said.

"We are at a very critical stage in our negotiations," John Broughton, assistant chief constable of the Essex Police, said immediately after the first group was released.

The hijackers had released a total of 22 hostages in return for supplies during earlier stops in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia before arriving at Stansted early today.

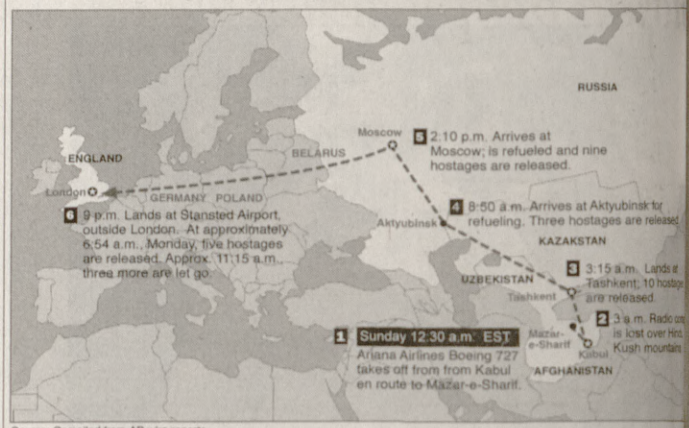
Broughton said the only requests the hijackers made in Stansted were for food, water, some basic sanitary equipment and unspecified medical supplies.

A diplomat familiar with the negotiations in Moscow said the hijackers sought to free a prisoner held in the Afghan city of Kandahar.

Afghan media speculated the hijackers were dissidents who wanted the release of

Afghan hijacking route

Authorities at Stansted Airport, outside London, are negotiating with the hijackers of an Afghan Ariana Airline plane taken over in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Sunday and forced to make stops in Central Asia, Russia and Europe.



Source: Compiled from AP wire reports

Ismael Khan, a former regional governor who has been held since 1997 by Afghanistan's ruling Taliban movement. Khan is a member of Afghanistan's opposition alliance, which still rules roughly 10 percent of the war shattered country.

Authorities said they could not confirm the nationalities of the remaining hostages aboard the Boeing 727. Earlier, they had disclosed that one passenger has a kidney illness that requires special treatment, but Stalling said she did not know if that passenger was among those released.

The state-run Ariana Airlines plane was seized shortly after takeoff early

Sunday on a domestic flight from Afghan capital, Kabul, to the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The airliner remained parked at a half-mile from Stansted's main terminal. An emergency official in Kazan said there were 20 hijackers aboard; three passengers released there said to 10 hijackers were aboard.

The hijackers released nine passengers in Moscow, but made no demands, Russian security spokesman Alexander Zdanovich said. The plane was seized shortly after takeoff early

Catholic nuns among dead in helicopter crash

LUANDA, Angola (AP) — An overloaded military helicopter crashed and burst into flames shortly after taking off from southern Angola over the weekend, killing 30 people, officials said Monday.

Hospital sources in Lubango said three Roman Catholic nuns were among the fatalities. Twelve people survived the crash, including the aircraft's crew and a 3-year-old child.

The MI-8 transport helicopter took off Saturday from an air base at Lubango en route to the Angolan capital of Luanda, 620 miles to the north, officials said.

Airport officials in Lubango said the pilot contacted the control tower minutes after takeoff to say he would try to land again because of technical problems. The pilot also reportedly asked for a firefighting team to be placed on standby.

Soon after, the helicopter crashed at the Lubango base. The survivors managed to step out of the flaming helicopter after it slammed into the airstrip.

The nationalities of the victims were not immediately available. Their identities were not released, and no passenger list was drawn up before the flight.



AP

The Defense Ministry said Monday it had opened an inquiry to determine the cause of the crash.

The helicopter apparently was overloaded: It had a capacity for 35 people and was carrying 42.

Authorities end strike

MEXICO CITY (AP) — In a surprisingly smooth conclusion to the 1 1/2-month occupation of Latin America's largest university, police cleared the main campus Sunday and arrested 632 striking students.

The raid ended an exasperating deal in which Mexican authorities from President Ernesto Zedillo's administration seemed unable to wrest the country's most important academic institution from a tiny band of radical students with names like Mosh and The Devil.

Armed only with batons and shields, about 2,400 federal police marched into an all-night meeting of the student strike council at 6 a.m. and rounded up about 430 students, including the eight top strike leaders.

The strikers did not resist arrest, and there were no injuries. Police swept through the giant campus, detaining hundreds more strikers.

The 291-day strike at the 260,000-student National Autonomous University of Mexico began in April. Protest plans to raise annual tuition, which had been just a few cents, to the equivalent of \$140.

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