

Search continues for eight, Cuban plane forced to land

Hijacked aircraft goes down near Key West waters

MIAMI (AP) — A sea plane taking off from Cuba was hijacked Tuesday morning and went down in rough international waters off Key West with up to 18 people aboard, authorities said. One person was killed and nine were rescued, the Coast Guard said.

It was not clear whether the plane, which is able to land on water, had crashed or had landed after running out of fuel.

A Coast Guard jet carrying rafts, a Coast Guard cutter and two Florida Air National Guard fighter jets reached the area Tuesday afternoon but reported no immediate sightings.

A U.S. AWACS plane picked up an emergency beacon in the area, White House press secretary Joe Lockhart told reporters.

Later, the Pentagon said nine peo-

ple were pulled from the wreckage and one body was recovered. The nine were picked up by a passing cargo ship, the Chios Dream, and were

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— Jim McPherson
Coast Guard Commander

to be flown by helicopter to Key West for medical treatment, Coast Guard Petty Officer Danielle DeMarino said from Miami. Their con-

ditions were not immediately available. A search for others possibly on board the plane continued.

The Russian-made Antonov AN-2 Colt took off from Herradura Airport in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, and went down about 90 miles southwest of Key West and 75 miles northwest of Havana, U.S. officials said.

"Apparently it was hijacked, and the pilot indicated they only had 1 1/2 hours fuel," said Lauren Gail Stover, associate director of Miami-Dade County Aviation Department.

The Federal Aviation Administration received unconfirmed reports of 14, 16 or 18 people on the plane. Coast Guard Lt. Prince Neal said there was a report of two children aboard.

Seas in the area were 4 to 6 feet, rough conditions for small boats or small float planes, the Coast Guard said. However, the water temperature was warm.

"The water's very warm, and that really extends your ability to stay alive. That's why we're extending so many assets," Coast Guard Cmdr. Jim McPherson said.

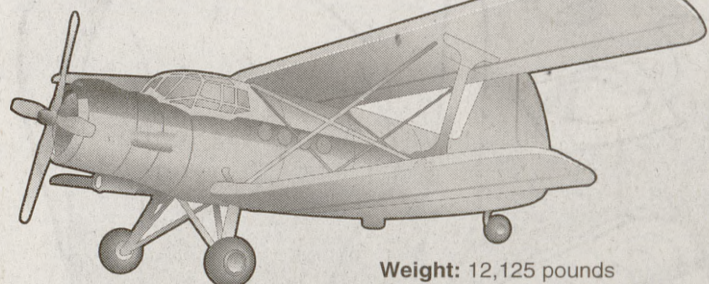
The long-range single-engine bush plane is equipped with pontoons for taking off and landing on water. It is used for passenger flights, crop-dusting and forest fire suppression.

Air traffic control in Havana notified the air traffic control center in Miami at 8:45 a.m. that an aircraft was being hijacked and flying northwest out of Cuba, said Kathleen Bergen, an FAA spokeswoman in Atlanta.

The FAA had no voice or radar contact with the aircraft, Bergen said.

Antonov AN-2 Colt

A single-engine, propeller-driven biplane taking off from Cuba was hijacked Tuesday and went down off Key West, Fla.



Wing span: 59 feet 8 1/2 inches
Length: 42 feet 6 inches
Height: 13 feet 9 1/4 inches

Weight: 12,125 pounds (maximum takeoff weight)
Max. cruising speed: 157 mph
Range: 562 miles (with maximum fuel)
Origin: Russia

Source: Jane's All the World's Aircraft

AP

Learning the ropes



STUART VILLANUEVA/The Bureau

Senior agricultural development major Jody Burrows climbs a rope ladder while junior management information systems major P.D. Fulham and senior management information systems major Chris Rider stand ready to catch her during their Venture Dynamics class Tuesday.

News in Brief

Vatican against use of condoms

VATICAN CITY (AP) — A Vatican official said Tuesday that two American Jesuits have distorted church positions by suggesting that the Vatican has become "more tolerant" about the distribution of condoms to fight AIDS.

Monsignor Jacques Suaudeau said the Vatican stance hasn't changed, although the church must not be seen as indifferent to AIDS sufferers and the battle to stop the disease's spread.

Some in the church have been seeking a softening in the position of the Vatican, which has been accused by some governments of hindering the AIDS battle.

Writing in the Sept. 23 issue of America, a Jesuit magazine, the authors pointed to an April article written by Suaudeau in the Vatican newspaper.

They said it contained important signals: That while some individual bishops have repudiated local HIV prevention programs that include the distribution of condoms, "the Roman curia is more tolerant on the matter."

Oil prices high, yet economy good

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (AP) — Surging oil prices and the sinking euro are rattling markets, but the International Monetary Fund predicted

Tuesday the world economy demonstrate better growth than it has in more than a decade.

Economies should also remain at healthy rates in 2001, led by powerful U.S. expansion, growth in Europe and a continuing recovery from the Asian financial crisis, the IMF said in its latest World Economic Outlook.

The IMF predicted the global economy will grow by 4.7 percent this year, a 0.5 percentage point increase from the last such prediction in May, which would match growth last recorded in 1988.

But oil prices hovering at levels unseen since the 1997 Asian crisis could spoil the rosy picture, officials acknowledged.

Gene-based therapy discovered for obesity

JERUSALEM (AP) — Australian scientists have identified a new gene responsible for controlling appetite in humans — a discovery experts said could lead to the first gene-based drug to treat obesity and diabetes.

Greg Collins, a professor of microbiology at Deakin University in Melbourne, discovered the gene while researching diabetes in Israeli desert rats. The gene, which he called Beacon, cranks up the appetite and the rat version is identical to the human one.

The find, presented Tuesday at a conference of the European Society for the Study of Diabetes, is the third gene linked to obesity, after leptin and NPY.

Sir George Alberti, president-elect of the International Diabetes Federation, said a drug based on Beacon could be available sooner than one targeting the other two genes because the rat and human genes are a 100 percent match. This means drug research could proceed more quickly than normal because the results in rats would be more relevant to humans, he said.

"It is a very exciting development. It could be a very important step in the whole obesity, diabetes pathway," he said.

Collins and his team took sand rats from the Negev desert in Israel to a laboratory in Melbourne for diabetes research. On their cactus diet in the desert, the rats were lean and healthy. But placed in a Western environment, where rat chow was abundant, some ate a lot, got fat and developed diabetes; others ate reasonable amounts and remained lean.

This prompted the researchers to look for genetic differences. They removed the rats' brains, examined every gene to find whether any were more active in the fat rats and came up with the Beacon gene.

Genes direct the formation, or expression, of proteins that a cell uses to function, repair or defend itself, and to divide. In the obese rats, the Beacon gene was working in overdrive, forming too much appetite-stimulating protein.

Once they had deciphered the sequence, or unique code, of the rat gene, the scientists searched for a match on an Internet gene databank.

They found an 81-percent match with the earthworm, said Dr. Zimmet, professor of diabetes at Monash University in California, Australia, who participated in the search.

About 800 million years of evolution separate the earthworm from the Israeli sand rat, said Zimmet, adding that a gene which has served 81 percent over 800 million years of evolution must play an important role.

"It could be a very important step in the whole obesity, diabetes pathway."

— Sir George Alberti
International Diabetes Federation

Collins then searched the Internet for anything that matched the rat gene sequence. He found the Beacon gene sequence in human DNA.

The Beacon gene produces a protein that stimulates the appetite. It does the same thing, whereas in obese people, the body does not respond to leptin.

Collins then produced the Beacon gene from the human Beacon gene and injected it into the brains of rats with normal behavior of the Beacon gene. They gained about 5 percent of their own body weight in 7 days.

When he injected protein from both the Beacon and NPY genes, the rats ate even more and gained by 10 percent in a week.

Preliminary studies show the Beacon gene is the same across regions and ethnicities, Collins said.

The next step, Collins said, is to subject the protein to hundreds of chemicals to see if any can block its action.

The hope is that a drug could be developed to block the protein if the gene is passed on too much of the protein. The first drug would then be tested on rats before being given to humans.

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Revolution

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6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

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physics, and marketing majors welcome!



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