92 on German Plane Hijacked to Bahrain

LARNACA, Cyprus (AP) — Gunmen demanding the "release of all comrades detained in West German prisons" hijacked a Lufthansa jetliner with 92 persons aboard yesterday, refueled in Rome and on Cyprus, and then flew to Bahrain.

The Larnaca control tower said the two-engine Boeing 737 was permitted to land on the island emirate in the Persian Gulf at 3:52 a.m. today (8:52 p.m. EDT yesterday), three hours after it left here.

The jet had passed over Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Kuwait, raising speculation in each country it would try to land there. Kuwaiti authorities said the pilot made a pass at their airport, which was blocked to prevent it from landing, then continued on toward Bahrain.

A special Lufthansa relief plane touched down at Larnaca early today. Airport officials said it had 52 persons on board, including a backup crew for the hijacked plane and security and medical personnel, and would follow the path of the hijacked airliner.

The jet, with a crew of five and 87 passengers including the hijackers, was commandeered, over the French Riviera by at least two men who pulled guns on the pilot.

There were reports the hijacking was related to the kidnaping early last month of prominent West German industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer. Sources in Cyprus said the hijackers also mentioned prisoners in Turkish jails whose freedom they sought.

Lufthansa said most of the passengers were West German vacationers returning from Mallorca, a popular vacation island that has no special airport security precautions.

A West German television report said they included 11 German beauty queens who won titles on Mallorca last year and returned to the island on a visit sponsored by the contest organizers.

During the refueling stop in Rome, a hijacker calling himself Walter Mohammed demanded "the release of all comrades detained in West German prisons" and at one point threatened to blow up the plane. He also said: "We are fighting against imperialistic organizations of the world."

The jet then flew to Larnaca airport in the Greek section of Cyprus.