

# Lufthansa planes go on alert to thwart terrorists

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BONN — Airlines were suddenly ordered to change their flight patterns, lights on board were dimmed and helicopters at low altitude were guarding the approaches to airports as West Germany's civil aviation went on a top alert yesterday to foil threatened terrorist attacks.

Messages purportedly from the remnants of the dangerous Baader-Meinhof gang had warned earlier this month that beginning yesterday three planes of Lufthansa, the West German airline, would be blown up in midair.

Up to early today, no incidents had been reported. Yet the rigorous precautions affected flight operations throughout West Germany, caused Lufthansa to lose passengers and advance bookings, and had repercussions also on foreign airlines operating here and elsewhere in Europe.

A spokesman for Lufthansa, Helmut Kaulich, said in Cologne the airline suffered losses in passengers yesterday, "but I cannot quantify them — it will take days before we have all the figures."

Security precautions appeared to be unusually tight yesterday also at airports in countries bordering West Germany. The painstaking controls of passengers and luggage delayed some flights.

In West Germany, vigilance was exceptional also on the ground in a wide area around major airports.

The threats that airborne Lufthansa planes would be destroyed seemed to suggest that terrorists might attempt to hit aircraft with surface-to-air missiles shortly after takeoff or during their landing approach. In the past few years, pro-Palestinian extremists are known to have plotted unsuccessfully to attack aircraft of El Al, the Israeli airline, with rockets from the ground near Paris and Rome airports.

To reduce risks, flight controllers yesterday instructed pilots to swerve erratically from long-established flight paths. After dark, cabin lights that might pinpoint target airplanes were switched off on takeoff and before landing.

The warnings that three aircraft would be destroyed were contained in letters to West German and French news organizations mailed in Frankfurt Nov. 2. Lufthansa said it had received similar threats earlier. The messages said the Lufthansa planes would be blown up to avenge the "assassination" of three extremists — Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe — in Stammheim prison outside Stuttgart on Oct. 18.

The three were found dead in their cells a few hours after a West German commando unit stormed a hijacked Lufthansa airliner at the airport of Mogadishu, Somalia, rescuing all 86 hostages aboard. The three inmates of Stammheim penitentiary were found by an international team of medical examiners to have taken their own lives, apparently in a suicide pact.