



United Press International  
AFTER ATTACK BY ARABS: Israeli jetliner at Athens airport. Its port engines, one visible at left, were damaged.

## 2 Arab Terrorists Attack Israeli Jetliner in Athens

Special to The New York Times

ATHENS, Dec. 26—Two Arab gunmen opened fire on a New York-bound Israeli jetliner as it prepared to take off from the Athens airport today. One of the 41 passengers was killed, the Boeing 707's port engines were wrecked and the plane caught fire.

One of the bullets that riddled the windows killed Leon Shirdan, a 50-year-old Israeli maritime engineer and ex-naval officer. A 28-year-old Israeli hostess, Hannah Spira, suffered a fractured leg and serious spinal injuries when she jumped out of the plane. She was taken to a hospital.

[Israel warned Arab governments backing commandos that Arab airliners were as vulnerable as Israeli planes, Reuters reported. Premier Levi Eshkol called the attack "insane terrorism." Page 3.]

### Chased on Runway

The two suspects were caught and disarmed by the Greek police after a chase on the runway while fire squads put out the fire on the El Al plane, preventing the explosion of the 30-ton fuel tanks.

The suspects were later identified as Maheb H. Sleiman, 19, of Tripoli, Libya, who said he was a student, and Mahmoud M. Mohamad, 25, a Palestinian Arab who said he was a teacher. They are to appear before the Athens public prosecutor tomorrow.

Witnesses said that the El Al plane, scheduled to complete regular Flight 253 from Tel Aviv to New York via Athens, was warming up its engines when the attack came at 11:50 A.M. Athens time.

Two men posing as passengers approached. One of them, carrying a bag, pulled out a submachine gun and opened fire on the plane's engines.

### Grenades Thrown at Engines

The other hurled what was described as incendiary grenades at the jet engines. As one engine caught fire, the aircraft's doors were thrown open and the crew prepared emergency slides for the passengers to reach the ground.

One of the inflatable slides was hit by a bullet and put out of action. As the passengers slid out of the plane they had to duck bullets to run toward the buildings.

Greek policemen converged on the gunmen, who continued to fire, scattering leaflets at the same time identifying themselves as members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The handbills gave in question-and-answer form in English "our aims and objectives." They said that the front was not anti-Semitic "because the Arabs are Semites."

The two suspects were questioned by Deputy Premier

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## ***Arab Terrorists Attack an Israeli Jet in Athens***

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Stylianos Patakos, who had hurried to the airport. They told him that they were Arab commandos with "orders to destroy an Israeli plane and kill Jews."

Later the men were interrogated by Greek intelligence and taken to Athens Security Police headquarters for the night.

The Athens public prosecutor said he would charge them with murder, illegal possession and use of arms, and damage to foreign property.

The police said that the machinegun bore no identification marks but others said it was a Soviet-made weapon.

### **25 Bullet Holes Seen**

About 25 bullet holes were seen. Experts said that four incendiary grenades had been thrown. Two more were found still in the bag.

The two suspects arrived in Athens at 10:34 A.M., from Beirut aboard an Air France jet. They were paged in the lounge and reported missing when the Air France plane took off for Paris at 11:22 A.M. Twenty-eight minutes later the El Al plane was attacked.

They were traveling on the type of passports used by refugees or stateless persons.

They are to be tried before a Greek criminal court unless, in view of martial law in effect in Greece, the military authorities ask that they be tried under the summary procedure of a special military court.



Associated Press

These pictures of Maher Hussein Yamani, at the left, and Mahmoud Mohammed Issa were released in Beirut, Lebanon, by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which identified the men as the attackers of the El Al jet aircraft yesterday. The police in Athens have identified the two men as Maheb H. Sleiman and Mahmoud M. Mohamad.

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