

Chronology of rescue

From Wire Reports

Details of the spectacular rescue mission by German anti-terrorist commandos have not been released by the West German government. What follows is an account compiled from unofficial sources and eyewitnesses.

At midnight the count-down begins:

12:05 — The explosive charges are being ignited. The doors burst open and flash grenades are hurled into the jetliner from several sides. The flashing light and deafening bang cause a fleeting but paralyzing shock among passengers and gunmen.

These few seconds of confusion are enough for the commandos to storm the aircraft and overpower the gunmen after an exchange of shots that kill three of the hijackers.

12:09 — A radio operator with the code name Oscar X Ray reports, "Passengers are being evacuated."

12:11 — "It seems all passengers have left the aircraft," Oscar X Ray adds.

12:15 — Security officials aboard the nearby commando jet inquire, "How many dead; how many injured?" The reply from Oscar X Ray: "The passengers are running around on the apron. It looks as though everything is quite positive."

12:17 — "Mission completed, we are entering the plane," Oscar X Ray reports.

12:43 — Confirmation is received from the raided Lufthansa jetliner: Passengers are all safe. Three commandos injured, one seriously. Three terrorists dead, one critically wounded.

12:47 — Final message to Oscar X Ray, "We congratulate you on a successful mission."