

= Lufthansa Flight 592 =

Lufthansa Flight 592 was a regularly scheduled passenger flight from Frankfurt , Germany to Addis Ababa , Ethiopia that was hijacked on February 11 , 1993 . The Lufthansa @-@ operated Airbus A310 @-@ 300 was hijacked by Nebiu Demeke , an Ethiopian man who forced the pilot to fly to New York City 's John F. Kennedy International Airport . The aircraft landed safely , and the gunman surrendered peacefully and without incident . He was charged with air piracy in United States district court , and was sentenced to 20 years in prison .

= = Flight = =

Flight 592 was an international flight operated by Deutsche Lufthansa AG between Frankfurt International Airport , Frankfurt , Germany , and Bole International Airport , Addis Ababa , Ethiopia , with a scheduled intermediate stop at Cairo International Airport , Cairo , Egypt . The aircraft was an Airbus A310 @-@ 300 , registration D @-@ AIDM , that had been in service since August 30 , 1991 . The flight carried 94 passengers and 10 crew .

= = Hijacker = =

Nebiu Zewolde Demeke was born on September 24 , 1972 in Egypt . His father , an economist , was a political prisoner in Ethiopia , and the Demeke family moved to Morocco after his arrest to escape persecution . Nebiu Demeke studied at the American School in Tangiers , Morocco , where he was described as " distracted " and " emotional . " His older sister , Selamawit , went to study at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg , Pennsylvania . His older brother , Demter , enrolled at Macalester College in St. Paul , Minnesota , and his younger brother , Brook , lived in Indiana . Though Demeke attempted to join his siblings in the United States , he was denied a student visa , and was unable to otherwise receive permission to legally enter the country .

Six months prior to the hijacking , 20 @-@ year @-@ old Demeke moved to Germany and applied for political asylum . When he withdrew his application for asylum , the German government purchased him a ticket on Flight 592 back to Ethiopia .

Demeke entered the airport carrying a starting pistol loaded with blanks . Prior to reaching security , he placed the pistol on his head and covered it with an " Indiana Jones " -style fedora . When it came time to pass through the metal @-@ detector , he pinched the top of the hat and placed both it and the hidden pistol on a table . He retrieved both prior to boarding the plane .

= = Hijacking = =

At Frankfurt Airport , Nebiu Demeke took advantage of the airport security by stuffing a pistol deep into his hat and then placing his hat on a table adjacent to the scanner . The security guards were not as strict as now since the incident took place before 9 / 11 and they allowed Demeke to pass .

Approximately 35 minutes into the flight , as the aircraft reached cruising altitude in Austrian airspace , Demeke entered the forward lavatory . He put on a black ski mask and removed his pistol . Leaving the lavatory , he entered the cockpit , which was unlocked . Placing the pistol to the pilot 's head , he said , " If you do not turn west , I 'll shoot you . "

Demeke demanded that the aircraft be flown to New York City and demanded political asylum in the United States . After being told that the plane would need to be refueled , Demeke agreed to allow a refueling stop in Hannover , Germany . The aircraft landed at Hannover @-@ Langerhagen Airport around noon local time , where it was surrounded by law enforcement officials . Demeke remained in the cockpit with the pistol to the pilot 's head , and threatened to begin killing a flight attendant every five minutes . German authorities allowed the plane to depart after Demeke threatened to kill his hostages but promised to surrender peacefully upon reaching the United States .

Pilot Gerhard Goebel was able to calm Demeke down during the non @-@ stop flight to New York . Though Demeke kept the pistol pointed at Goebel 's head for the duration of the flight , he removed

his ski mask . Goebel later told newspapers that he spent the hours trying to build a rapport with Demeke , who admitted to having spent several months planning the hijacking . Both men agreed that , upon arriving in New York , Goebel would give Demeke his sunglasses in exchange for Demeke 's pistol .

The aircraft arrived at John F. Kennedy International Airport at around 4 : 00 pm EDT and taxied to a remote part of the runway . A three @-@ man hostage negotiation team had been assembled in the air traffic control tower . NYPD detective Dominick Misino spoke with Demeke over the radio , assisted by FBI special agent John Flood and Port Authority detective sergeant Carmine Spano . After 70 minutes of negotiation , Demeke traded his pistol for the pilot 's sunglasses and surrendered peacefully to authorities . All 94 passengers and ten crew were unharmed .

= = Aftermath = =

Nebiu Demeke was arrested and charged with air piracy in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn . He was arraigned on February 12 , 1993 ; Judge Allyne Ross ordered him held without bail until his trial . Demeke remained convinced that he would not spend any time in prison and that he would be granted asylum . During the course of his trial , he was twice found to be incompetent to stand trial and was prescribed medication for depression and hallucinations . He represented himself during the course of his four @-@ day trial . He was found guilty in a jury trial after an hour of deliberation , and Judge Sterling Johnson , Jr. sentenced him to prison until 2013 .

Germany was criticized severely by the international press for lax security measures in Frankfurt Airport that allowed Demeke to smuggle a pistol on board , and for allowing the hijacked aircraft to leave after refueling in Hannover . Frankfurt Airport , the busiest airport in Europe at the time , had recently come under fire after the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie , Scotland in 1988 , when it had been alleged that the explosives had been loaded in Frankfurt . Since the 1988 bombing , the Frankfurt airport had performed numerous security reviews and implemented more stringent security procedures .

The incident was the first trans @-@ Atlantic hijacking since five Croatian nationalists hijacked TWA Flight 355 on September 10 , 1976 . In that incident , the domestic New York @-@ Chicago flight was forced to fly to Paris , France .

In 2012 , the hijacking was mentioned on an episode of the TV show Hostage : Do or Die on the episode " The Last Transatlantic Hijacking " .