

Cuban jet stowaway holds on, at 40 below;

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Body

A **Cuban** man who **hid** in the **wheel** compartment of a DC-10 **jet** wrapped his shirt around heating pipes to **survive** temperatures of nearly **40** degrees **below** zero and avoid falling out during a four-hour **flight** to **Canada**.

"I consider myself very lucky to have **survived**. Thank God," the **stowaway**, in his 20s, said Monday evening after his first appearance before a refugee panel.

The man, who cannot be identified by name under a publication ban imposed by **Canada's** Immigration and Refugee Board, has been ordered held until a hearing Friday.

Robert Gervais, a spokesman for the Citizenship and Immigration Department, said the man could be granted conditional release while he sought refugee status, similar to political asylum in the United States.

"Concerning his refugee claim, that will be heard by the refugee board - probably several months from now," Gervais said yesterday.

An **airport worker** at the Havana **airport**, the man climbed into the **wheel well** of Cubana **Flight** 170 before it departed for Cayo Coco resort en route to Montreal last Friday.

During the **flight**, he said, he embraced a heating pipe, wrapping his shirt around it to **hold** on and get as much warmth as possible. Aviation experts say the temperature was likely about **40** degrees **below** zero, with little oxygen at an altitude of 30,000 feet.

"I kept my face close to it [the pipe], and that helped me to breathe," the man told the all-news channel LCN. "I thought that certain parts of my body would freeze. But when the airplane descended, I warmed up."

Gervais said **workers** at Montreal's Dorval **Airport** saw the man stumbling on the runway after the **flight** landed. He was hospitalized and treated for hypothermia and exhaustion, then placed in immigration custody.

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In most cases, people attempting to hide in the wheel well of large jetliners such as a DC-10 die from the cold and lack of oxygen.

Last week, two boys believed to be as young as 12 were found dead in the wheel compartment of a Ghana Airways DC-10 that flew from Ghana's capital, Accra, to London.

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