

79 PASSENGERS HELD AS ALIENS

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Body

ATLANTA (AP) - Seventy-nine people suspected of being illegal aliens were among the 179 passengers aboard an Eastern Airlines flight from Los Angeles to New York that stopped Monday in Atlanta, federal agents said. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents received a tip from sources at Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport that aliens might be on board, said Tom Thomas, a spokesman for the immigration service.

The agents boarded the plane shortly after its arrival and arrested the suspects, Thomas said. "We suspect that a smuggler assists them in boarding the aircraft in Los Angeles," Thomas said, adding that the aliens probably are greeted in New York by relatives and another smuggler. Thomas said the agency's sources had indicated that aliens use of the same flight was "a regular occurrence" for the past 30 days, and he estimated that thousands of illegal aliens had flown across the country on Eastern airliners. "It appears at this point from our sources that it's almost a daily occurrence," he said. He said he did not know how the aliens had got into the country.

FOLLOWING TEXT APPEARS IN 3* EDITION Thirty-nine of the suspects were from Mexico, 22 from Guatemala, 13 from the Dominican Republic, three from El Salvador and one each from Honduras and Ecuador. They were being transferred to immigration service processing centers in Florida and Texas for deportation, he said.

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