Approved For Release 20000888A@USRDP\$GHD784R50000092000240 Go on Trial

By Robert J. McCartney Washington Post Foreign Service

FRANKFURT, July 4-Shortly after 2:30 a.m. on June 15, 1985, two radical Shiite hijackers wearing two rancar sinite mackers wearing Palm Beach suits and Italian shoes dragged U.S. Navy diver Robert Dean Stethem of Waldorf, Md., to the door of a TWA jet parked on a runway of Beirut International Air-port, shot him in the head and hurled his body to the tarmac.

On Tuesday, in a \$6.7 million, high-security courtroom built for the occasion, Lebanese Mohammed Ali Hamadei goes on trial on charges of

having participated in the murder.

The trial will be scrutinized by Washington policymakers and Beirut kidnapers as a rare instance in nich a suspected major internaonal terrorist faces the court of a stern democracy.

We will be watching it closely as a reasure of effective western re-spose to terrorism, said L. Paul Breher, the State Department's ambassador-at-large for counter-terrorism. terrorism

terrorism.

In Lebanon, the kidnapers of West German chemical company manager Ridolf Cordes also will be ratching. They grabbed Cordes as thostage four days after Hamadei's arrest in January 1986, to press for the defendant's release. Two other was demanded in Lebanon but have been released. The case carries conderable symbolic importance in me United

symbolic importance in the United States, because the dramatic 17-day

States, because the dramatic 17-day hijacking is one of the best known instances in which terrorists directly challenged the U.S. government.

In many American memories, the image still is sharp of Capt. John L. Testralo. Televised interview in the Boeing 727 cockpit while a hijacker pointed a gun at his head. Purser Ulrike (Uil) Derickson became a heroine for refusing the hicame a heroine for refusing the hijackers' demand that she pick out passports of passengers with Jewish-sounding names.

This is an extremely important case because of the brutality of the crimes and the prolonged agony of the passengers who were held hos-tage." Bremer said.

Thirty-nine Americans out of the original 153 passengers and crew were held hostage for the full 17 days. More than 700 Moslem detainees held by Israel were released in stage. 22 the hinchers had dein stages, as the hijackers had de-

manded, after the hijacking ended.

Hamadei faces a mandatory life riamage races a mandatory lite sentence if he is convicted of murdering Stethem. The prosecution plans to call 125 witnesses, including a large number of the American passengers, and the trial is scheduled to last until December.

It is understood that none of the witnesses actually saw which hijack-er pulled the trigger. Under German law, however, a hijacker could be found guilty of murder if he was aware that the killing was planned and approved it.

Passengers have said they saw a man who resembles Hamadei drag Stethem to the front of the cabin wave a gun in the air, and exult after the shooting.

There is a possibility that the maximum sentence could be re-

15 years if the court it is important that Haduced madei s under 21—and there-in adult—at the time the hijackin was planned. Persons between e ages of 18 and 21 can receive special treatment under West Coman law

Accoling to the birthdate on everalificial documents, Hamadei severa turned at the day before the hijack-ing been, and now is 24.

A deument purported to be a Lebane birth certificate indicating

that he four years younger-which would squire that he be treated as a and face a maximum 10 years' tentence-is not taken very riousy even by his court-appointed defense attorney, Gabriele Steck-

Hamadei also faces sentences of up to 15 years' imprisonment if convicted on a variety of other charges, including hijacking, hostage-taking, aggravated robbery and what trans-lates from German as "robber-like extortion." He faces lesser charges of causing grievous bodily harm, explosives violations and forgery.

The stakes in the case are mixed for West Germany, where Hamadei was caught 18 months ago at Frankfurt airport as he allegedly tried to smuggle in four bottles of highly ex-

plosive liquid disguised as wine. West German authorities have pledged to prosecute Hamadel to the full force of the law, and they know that any backsliding will di bitter protests from Washington

Court officials here and federal officials in Bonn emphasized that the nation's judiciary is independent of outside pressures. But Bonn also wants to safeguard hostage Cordes in Lebanon and has already disap-pointed Washington by refusing a year ago to extradite Hamadei to the United States to stand trial.



... accused of hijacking TWA je

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