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For Immediate Release

Campbellsville University students on plane with woman with suspected bomb

By Joan C. McKinney, news and publications coordinator

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. – Campbellsville University students had praise for flight attendants, the pilot and Border Patrol as they handled the situation on US Airways 787 May 22 as they were flying back from a mission trip from Niger.

Nine CU students, including two who graduated May 5, along with Ed Pavy, director of campus ministries, and Trent Creason of Campbellsville, campus ministries intern, were on the plane that was flying from Paris to Charlotte, N.C., and was diverted to Bangor, Maine.

“We are very thankful that the Campbellsville University staff and students, as well as all on US Airways flight 787, are safe and on their way home,” Dr. Michael V. Carter, president of CU, said.

“We appreciate the many phone calls and emails of concern about the safety of our CU staff and students and look forward to their return home,” Carter said.

A woman, who was from Cameroon, was suspected of having an explosive device implanted inside her was taken off the plane by federal authorities without a fight, according to Kevin Metzger, a senior from Richmond, Va., who graduated May 5.

Metzger said everybody was “really calm,” and the staff was calm and professional as they handled the situation.

He said the CU group was sitting in the back where the action happened with the woman. Metzger said he was sitting five rows from the back and saw the woman walk up

and down the aisle a few times.

An international flier for about six times, Metzger said he didn't notice anything out of the norm. A flight attendant went up and down the aisle several times.

He said medical personnel were called twice, and he said everyone thought the woman was ill. He said Kristen Large, a CU sophomore from Lewisburg, Ky., was sitting by an orthopedic surgeon who went to help.

"No one could see anything going on," Metzger said, "because it was behind the bathroom. I didn't think anything about it. I didn't know anything was wrong until the Border Patrol came on board."

Creason said he had seen the woman walk up and down the aisle two or three times past them. He said nothing had alarmed him about her.

Metzger said the pilot had announced they were landing as they needed more fuel. When they landed in Maine, the sight of emergency vehicles alerted them to a possible problem.

Creason said the officials came on board very quickly, escorted her out, had dogs who searched her luggage, and she was arrested.

Only after this had occurred did the pilot explain what had happened and the passengers were taken to charter buses and boarded another plane.

"Everybody was very calm in getting her off the plane," Creason said. "She didn't look like the happiest camper," he said, "but there was no fighting" when she was apprehended.

Metzger said there was another group of students from another school on the plane who were studying abroad, and they actually laughed about the situation. “We thought it was crazy that this was happening,” he said.

He said this was the first flight for some of the students, but they were doing well. “If they can survive this, I guess they are good for any situation,” Metzger said.

Creason said the group was returning from a mission trip to Niger, and they had stayed in Paris the night before. They left Paris about 11 a.m. local time Tuesday.

Metzger said the group was on an evangelistic mission trip with two CU alumni, Mark and Parker Hill Phillips, both 2002 graduates of CU, who have served in Niger for a few years.

He said there were two teams – and one painted while the others talked with people who would listen to their gospel, and then they exchanged places.

He said one person was saved during the trip, and he and Pavy performed a baptism.

The Niger team included: Pavy, Creason, Metzger, Large, Megan Parson, a senior of Greensburg, Ky.; Tyler Tucker, a freshman of Greensburg, Ky.; Haley Probus, a sophomore of Lebanon, Ky.; Kaela Vessels, a senior of Vine Grove, Ky.; John Harbold, a senior of Hopkinsville, Ky., who graduated May 5; Lauren Barr, a freshman of Ekron, Ky.; and Alexa Moore, a sophomore of Clarksville, Tenn.

News reports said the woman said she had an explosive device implanted in her body, but doctors could not find any scars on her body to indicate such a device had been implanted.

Campbellsville University is a widely acclaimed Kentucky-based Christian

university with more than 3,500 students offering 63 undergraduate options, 17 master's degrees, five postgraduate areas and eight pre-professional programs. The website for complete information is campbellsville.edu.