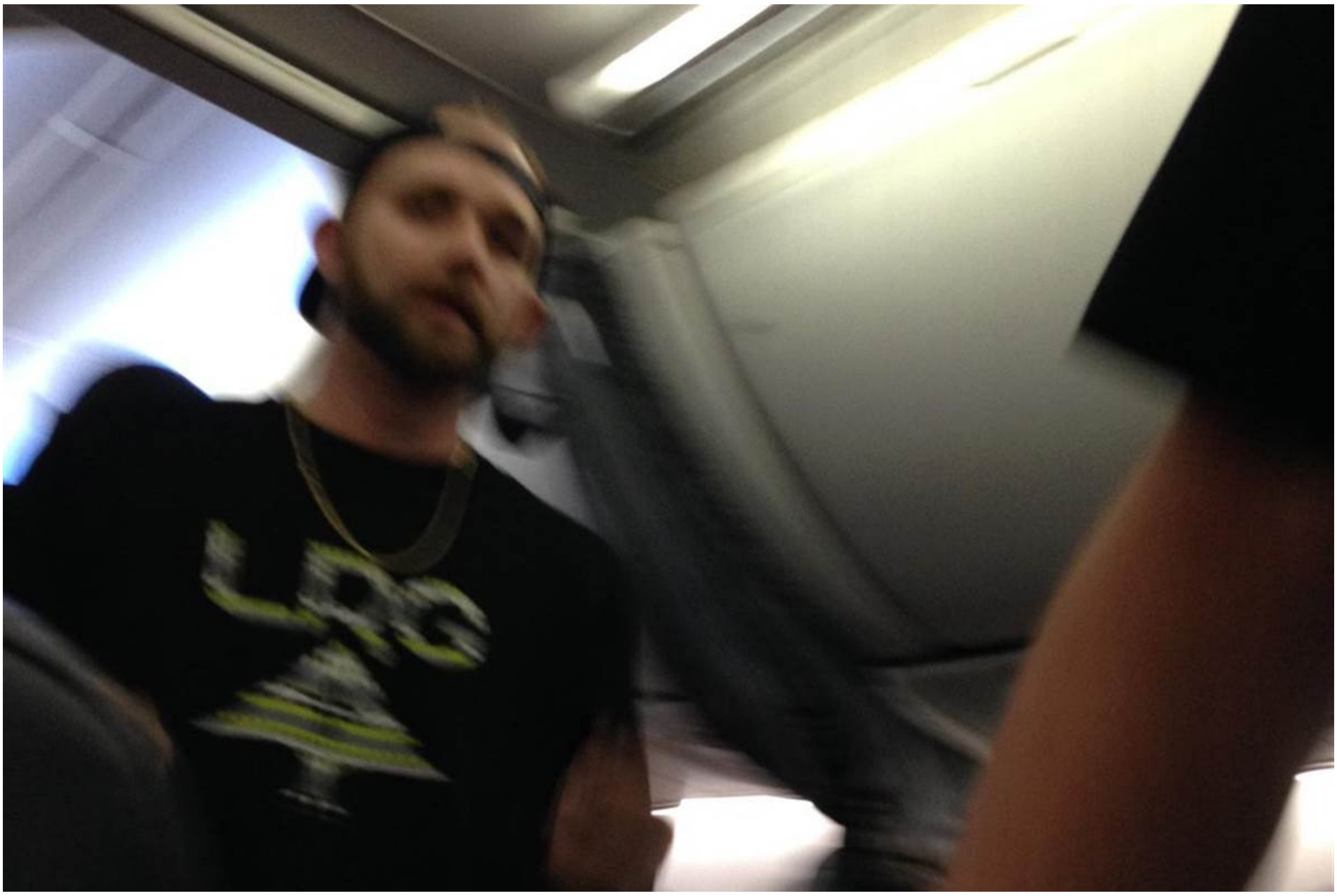
ALASKA AIRLINES FLIGHT DIVERTS TO DENVER AFTER PASSENGER THREATENS CREW

News / Airlines



An Alaska Airlines plane was forced to land midway through its flight after an intoxicated passenger became abusive and threatened crew members, the airline said late Tuesday.

Flight 769 was en route from Boston to San Diego on Tuesday evening when the male passenger "became disruptive," according to a statement from Alaska Airline.

"He was told to calm down by flight crew, and then became agitated and verbally abusive, even issuing a threat to flight crew," airline spokeswoman Ann Zaninovich said.

One passenger, Clair Conroy, told NBC News that the man "was upset the flight attendants would not let him drink the nips [small bottles of alcohol] he brought on" the flight.

"He got very belligerent, saying, 'OK, but you know that now we are all going to die.' He kept saying, 'I'm not a terrorist but we're going to die,'" Conroy added. "He then started making threats at the passengers."

With the Boeing 737 more than three hours into the journey and cruising at 32,000 feet, the pilot

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diverted the plane to the closest airport at Denver.

This decision was taken "out of an abundance of caution," airline spokeswoman Zaninovich said.

Police boarded the plane and escorted the man out of the aircraft. Cellphone footage showed many in the cabin applauding as officers led the man down the aisle.

The other passengers remained on the plane and after an approximately 45-minute delay the aircraft took off again for San Diego, where it landed around 10:20 p.m. (1:20 a.m. ET Wednesday), according to Flight Aware.

Heath Montgomery, spokesman for Denver International Airport, said in a recorded media message that the flight was diverted because of a "possible passenger disturbance," but added that there had been no charges brought in relation to the incident. She did not identify the passenger.

The Denver Police Department said it did not have any information and told NBC News to contact the FBI's local field office, which was not immediately available for comment early Wednesday.

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