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## Wife says husband was mentally ill

By Alan Levin, Mimi Hall and Thomas Frank, USA TODAY

Federal air marshals fired on a passenger for the first time in U.S. history Wednesday and killed a Florida man who falsely claimed to have a bomb in his backpack shortly after boarding a jet in Miami, the Department of Homeland Security said.



An undated family photo of Rigoberto Alpizar and his wife, Anne Buechner.

Courtesy of the Family

Rigoberto Alpizar, a 44-year-old home-improvement store worker, bolted from a jet on the ground after he was confronted by two air marshals, then was shot on the jetway, said James Bauer, special agent in charge of the air marshals' Miami field office. No explosives were found on Alpizar's body or in his bag. (Video: [Passenger shot in Miami](#))



Alan Diaz, AP

Police stand near a van parked next to American Airlines airplane as they detonate bags on the airport tarmac.

Moments later police boarded the plane and ordered over 100 passengers to sit motionless with their hands on their heads, according to Mary Gardner, a passenger aboard the Orlando-bound flight.

"It was quite

scary," Gardner told WTVJ-TV in Miami. "They wouldn't let you move."

Miami-Dade police are investigating the incident to determine whether deadly force was used appropriately. Officials with the Homeland Security Department said preliminary evidence suggested the shooting was justified. (Related blog: [Today in the Sky](#))

The marshals' actions were "consistent with their training," said Homeland Security spokesman Brian Doyle.

The marshals — a force of sharp-shooting, undercover officers who protect flights against terrorists — were formed to combat a spate of hijackings in the 1970s. The marshals force swelled to several thousand after the 9/11 attacks

to boost the nation's security. (**Related story:** [Air marshals thrust into spotlight](#))

Alpizar, of Maitland, Fla., attracted the attention of the two marshals after he rushed up the jet's aisle and said he had a bomb, according to Bauer. The Boeing 757 was minutes away from departing.

"They came out of their cover, confronted him and he remained non-compliant with their instructions," Bauer said. Alpizar fled the plane on to the jetway, the ramp that leads to the airport terminal. After the marshals told him to get on the ground, he turned and reached into his bag, prompting them to fire, Doyle said. (**Related story:** [Suspect's neighbors stunned by shooting](#))

As a precaution, air marshals fanned out to airports around the country to watch for signs of a widespread terror attack, but found nothing, Bauer said. "There is no reason to think there is any nexus to terrorism," he said.

Air marshals and FBI officials declined to comment at a news conference on what may have prompted Alpizar's actions. Gardner, the passenger aboard the jet, said she heard Alpizar's wife say he was bipolar, a potentially severe mental illness also called manic-depression. Gardner quoted the wife as saying Alpizar had not taken his medication.

Alpizar and his wife had arrived in Miami aboard a flight from Quito, Ecuador. He then boarded Flight 924, scheduled to leave at 2:18 p.m. But a few minutes before departure he raced up the aisle toward the cockpit, his arms flailing in the air, Gardner said.

He was followed by his wife, who yelled, "My husband! My husband!" Gardner said.

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