



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, THE AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION, AND PILOTS FROM EASTERN, UNITED, TWA, AND PAN AMERICAN AIRLINES PLUS EASTERN AIRLINES MANAGEMENT, THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 1970, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have just completed a most productive meeting with a responsible group of airline pilot representatives that pointed up the concern all of us feel for the safety of the crew that flies the airplanes and the people that ride in them.

We in the Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration consider this a most serious problem and want to assure the flying public that we will continue to give our utmost attention to insuring the safety of the flight crew and passengers. I can assure you that I consider this a very serious problem and I am most distressed over the incident in Boston the night before last that brought about today's meeting.

I think those of us who met are in complete agreement that the problem of violence is not confined to the sky. Our meeting this afternoon was held to make certain that all possible measures are taken to prevent hijacking and violence in the sky.

The suggestions by pilot representatives at today's meeting centered on improvements in the effectiveness of passenger pre-screening devices and methods of providing on-board security. Suggestions were made regarding the authority of the captain, carry-on luggage, and certain physical security devices for the cockpit, as well as other devices.

Several months ago, it was agreed that the most promising method of preventing violence aboard airplanes in flight was to develop and apply a system intended to identify passengers who would be likely to commit violence while a plane is in flight. Three airlines -- Eastern, TWA, and Pan American -- currently are using a detection system since developed. The FAA is discussing with three others the use of the system -- which is based on a behavioral profile and a metal screening device.

We are considering making this anti-hijacking system mandatory, so that every airline that operates at every airport in the nation will be screening passengers on every flight that is made.

In addition, I will urge the Attorney General to speed up the court procedures for those who are awaiting trial as airplane hijackers. And we will continue our efforts for multilateral and bilateral agreements with other nations so that hijackers will be returned to this country to stand trial.

The detection system developed by the FAA, which these gentlemen were briefed on today, remains the best method we have at this time to deal with this situation. Ideally, the detection system would prevent the boarding of passengers likely to cause violence. Then there would be no need for any other protection. But until the day comes when we have a perfect, or near-perfect detection system, we will continue to consider other means of assuring the safety of the flight crew and passengers. Such assurance remains our prime objective. We will not slacken our efforts until we can give it.

I will propose, within the next week, after consultation, a mechanism for further exploring and solving the problems discussed today.

Groups represented at today's meeting were the Air Line Pilots Association, the Air Transport Association, and pilots from Eastern Airlines, United Airlines, TWA, Pan American plus Eastern Airlines Management.

####

031970