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SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS BEFORE THE U.S. COAST GUARD'S 1970 NORTH ATLANTIC AIR AND SURFACE SEARCH AND RESCUE SEMINAR, ROOSEVELT HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY, MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1970, 9:30 A.M.

I am very happy to be with you this morning. I feel very much at home with the Coast Guard or with any meeting of which they are a part. There is something different -- and something better -- about men who have salt water in their veins -- men who go down to the sea in ships.

I should like at the outset to bring you the greetings of President Nixon and his best wishes for a successful conference. He is interested in the results you achieve from your work -- but he is also interested in the fact that representatives of several nations are working together in common cause to ameliorate a common threat. This is real progress. Cooperation on these matters will lead to increased understanding on other matters that may threaten to divide our nations.

At the outset, let me welcome to the United States the representatives of the many nations participating in this conference. I hope you find your work here profitable and I hope you enjoy seeing our country and meeting our people. We are very glad you are here.

There are many ways of dramatizing the challenges that concern you men here today. My way is to note that about the time I was coming of age, a courageous young man named Charles Lindbergh gripped the imagination of the world by flying alone across the Atlantic Ocean. Today -- only a few miles from here -- at Kennedy International Airport -- there will be not the "lone eagle", but hundreds and hundreds of people ready to depart on transatlantic flights. Or put it this way. One of today's 747's has as much productivity as fifteen of the large passenger ships that were operating in the great days of the ocean liners.

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But it is not only people -- vast numbers of people -- that give urgency to your deliberations. The importance of cargo has taken on new dimensions. The oceans of the world are now serving as the conveyor belt in a vast system of international mass production. Equally as important as the large volume of cargo is the changing nature of this cargo. The name "Torrey Canyon" describes one element of this cargo. A fascinating transportation story that came out of Washington a few years ago gives another version of the importance of cargo. The late philanthropist, Mrs. Ailsa Mellon Bruce, purchased as a gift for the National Gallery of Art the famous picture, Ginevra de Benci by Leonardo. The price -- about \$5 million. The next problem was how to get this famous lady back to the United States. There was the danger of theft, the danger of damage en route, the danger of getting lost. In sum, there was the danger that this great irreplaceable treasure of mankind might be lost to man forever. The solution was simple and direct. A special suitcase was made for Ginevra, she was packed away and a government official from the National Gallery bought two seats on a routine airline flight from Paris to New York. Ginevra was strapped in one seat -- her keeper took the one beside her. The famous lady arrived in Washington without fanfare, publicity or incident. (And I don't know whether the courier got one complimentary meal, or two!)

The number of passengers crossing our oceans by air or by surface is, thus, increasing every day.

The volume and the value and the nature of cargo making the same trips is also changing rapidly. The need for safety at sea consequently increases with each day.

But if the potential danger is increasing, so are the means for lessening that danger. Our communications are improving at a fantastic rate. Computers can provide almost instantaneous locations of the merchant fleets at sea. And our rescue vehicles -- high speed cutters equipped with helicopters -- and air stations in coastal locations -- all promise new advantage.

At the same time, the skill and expertise of our search and rescue services -- the U.S. Coast Guard and the rescue services of other nations -- are showing fantastic improvement.

And yet you men here today are not satisfied. You are here because you are dedicated to improve, and better, your professional expertise.

I commend your dedication. I have made it a practice in my career never to be satisfied. I know there is always a better way of doing things.

The major task of this conference, it seems to me, is to get a firm handle on the problem. The oceans of the world are vast and untamed. And on these cruel seas sail the ships of the world, while overhead fly the giant transport aircraft of many nations. These vessels and these aircraft are miniscule -- seemingly alone and lost when viewed against the great expanse of sea and sky. Yet, you professionals know that for every ship at sea today, there is another vessel sailing nearby within rescue range. The first problem, then, is utilizing, adapting and improving communications.

I would consequently urge members of this conference to adopt as a major function the sharing of knowledge. Science and technology are moving ahead so fast -- and with this speed, becoming so increasingly specialized -- that few individuals can claim with justice that they have complete and current command of their field. Let us, then, exchange knowledge.

I should like to stress here that all of us in the Department of Transportation are ready and anxious to share with all any specialized information that we may have that will help any nation improve their service. Disaster at sea knows no national restrictions. A case in point is the recent search for a downed Soviet aircraft in the North Atlantic. When human lives are at stake, we free ourselves of national self-interest.

I also urge you to re-examine your search and rescue systems to determine if, per chance, they are inhibited by man-made barriers. I have often found that sheer blind habit or unthinking tradition tends to be the source of a method of operations. I remember innumerable times in the State House in Boston when someone would object to a new program with the statement, "But, Governor, we always did it this way." Nothing can be more objectionable.

The technique for determining effectiveness is constant re-examination. Ask yourselves "why do we do it this way?" "What do we hope to accomplish?" "Is there a better way of accomplishing this?" These questions must be the business of this conference.

I would also urge you think big. You remember the quotation: "Make no little plans for they have no magic to stir men's blood!" How true this is. The moving force behind all new programs is this most potent element of human enthusiasm.

There is another reason for imagination. In this era of rapidly expanding technology, all things are possible and the extraordinary seems routine. I marvel again at miracle of the "amver" system. Here, on command, a computer will furnish a printout "picture" of a section of the ocean -- a picture which shows the location of all ships in the system -- as well as their speed and direction. A picture, finally, that tells us each vessel's capability for search and rescue. This is the kind of big thinking the world expects here in the last third of the phenomenal twentieth century.

I would remind you, too, of the tradition and rich heritage that is part of your calling. I know the men of our United States Coast Guard. I know them as freshly scrubbed cadets in New London at the Academy. I know them as seasoned veterans manning ships and stations throughout the world. And I see them as senior officers at headquarters in Washington and in districts around the country. Coast Guard men are superior men. They are superior because of their creed of service. I am sure the men of the search and rescue services of other nations are no less. I ask you then to be aware of this extra dimension. I ask that it play a part in your planning. It has a very active part in our Department of Transportation. Let me explain.

Our agency has two main functions -- to encourage and promote transportation -- and to regulate it for safety's sake. In my early months in office, I was not satisfied that the safety effort had enough emphasis in the higher levels of our Department. Accordingly, I created a new Assistant Secretary for Safety and Consumer Affairs. And with no hesitation, I immediately recommended to President Nixon the appointment of Admiral Willard Smith -- immediate past Commandant of the Coast Guard. I knew him well -- and I also knew of the spirit that motivates him.

And so I wish you well. The importance of your work is evident. The need for your work may come at any moment of the day or night -- at any season -- from any point of the compass. It may involve a couple of youngsters in an overturned sailboat -- or it may -- God forbid -- involve the lives of 400 passengers on a ditched 747. I support your efforts, consequently, with great enthusiasm and I pledge my complete cooperation in implementing any recommendations you may have. The call for help must never go unanswered.

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