



No Reg. *2,400* *4.26*

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE
AT "MAST" NEWS CONFERENCE WITH SECRETARY MELVIN R. LAIRD,
PENTAGON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 1970

Thank you Mel. I might point out that "MAST" stands for "Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic."

It is a distinct pleasure to join with Secretary Laird in making this announcement. I think that this combination of military skills and equipment with civilian needs and demands is coordination of the highest order. We are delighted to join with the Department of Defense in this significant humanitarian effort.

The decision to initiate the program came following completion of a study by both Departments in conjunction with the Departments of Health, Education and Welfare, Interior, Justice, and other Federal, State and local authorities.

The experiment in San Antonio is in line with the Federal role in supporting State efforts to render emergency medical aid to traffic accident victims and in conducting a number of emergency demonstration projects. At the same time, of course, our National Highway Safety Bureau is deeply involved with a number of other projects, such as our recently-announced alcohol countermeasures program, our project to build a fleet of experimental safety cars, the promulgation of standards for vehicle manufacturers and for the states, and a continuing educational program to make the driving public fully aware of the responsibilities involved in operating a motor vehicle.

Highway safety in all its aspects is a matter of key priority in our Department. Traffic accidents took well over 60,000 American lives last year, many of these deaths could have been prevented had efficient emergency evacuation capability been available for civilian utilization. With Defense Department resources and experience we expect to be able to provide the American public with an extra added value for their tax dollars. This is a demonstration project about which the Department of Transportation is tremendously enthusiastic -- one which we are sure will prove to be of immeasurable benefit.

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I might point out -- especially since I don't get to meet with the Pentagon press corps as often as I'd like -- that the Department of Transportation has its own military arm involved in the MAST Program. Management on our side will be handled by Captain Frank Barnett of the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard, of course, is the only branch of the Armed Services that is not part of the Department of Defense. One of its major missions is safety -- and we are confident that Captain Barnett's experience and background in maritime research and rescue operations will be extremely valuable as the MAST Program moves ahead..

He is here today -- along with Doug Toms, Director of the National Highway Safety Bureau -- and they will answer some of your more specific questions a little later.

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