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STATEMENT BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO AIRLINES AND MEMBERS OF THE AVIATION COMMUNITY ON TRANSPORTATION SECURITY, FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 1972

In his statement Thursday, President Nixon asked me to convene a meeting as soon as possible with the leaders of the aviation community.

I have just come from that meeting.

I can assure you of this: we are not going to tolerate the abuse of the Nation's airlines or the abridgement of the freedom to travel by anyone. The United States Government has the resources and the determination to see to it that the American people retain the right to travel by whatever means they choose and without fear for their safety.

The leaders of the aviation industry are in solid agreement on this point.

This is a threat to the safety and security of our civil air system that cannot, and will not, go unanswered. As you know, we already have systems for screening passengers and baggage. Those efforts are now going to be intensified and expanded.

The new FAA air carrier security regulations, published just last Monday, are being put into effect immediately. This means that passenger and baggage screening is now mandatory. It also means that airline aircraft, baggage rooms, and cargo facilities are off limits to unauthorized personnel. The airlines are directed to take every precaution to prevent or deter potentially destructive devices from being carried or hidden aboard the aircraft. Jack Shaffer, Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, is presently outlining for the airline representatives meeting here, the specific details for the implementation of these tighter security procedures on a regular and continuing basis.

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Additionally, as President Nixon has said, the rule requiring increased airport security, which was to have been announced in April with an effective date in June, is being expedited. Members of the Airport Operators Council International are also attending the meeting this morning. I have urged them to make every effort to weave a tight security web around the operating areas of their airports. Aircraft security and airport security must go hand in hand. The integrity of the total air transportation environment, from passenger check-in to aircraft take-off and landing must be assured. That is our objective, and we shall use every resource available to the Government to meet that objective.

We have demonstrated that we can deal from positions of strength and resourcefulness with the threats of air piracy. The countermeasures we have taken in the past have produced a dramatic reduction in the number of successful hijackings, from a high of 83 percent in 1969, to 44 percent last year, to 25 percent thus far this year. I am confident that by working together, Government and industry, labor and management, we can bring the current escalated threat to civil air security under control.

Speaking for all the Government agencies committed to solving this problem, and for the airline leaders at this meeting, we are in wholehearted agreement with President Nixon that we will not be intimidated. Neither will we leave the safety of a single air passenger to chance. We have the safest air system in the world; we intend to keep it that way.

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