

**Talking Points**  
**David R. Hinson, Administrator**  
**Federal Aviation Administration**  
**VSCS Dedication, Kansas City ARTCC**  
**November 1, 1996**

- It is a real pleasure to celebrate here today with the men and women who control the airspace and maintain the equipment that supports air traffic in this busy travel corridor.
- It is especially great to be here for the dedication of the Voice Switching and Control System -- a cornerstone of our modernization of the National Airspace System.

- There are two stories I want to talk about today. The first is the remarkable capability that VSCS gives us to handle the ever-increasing volume of air traffic. The second is how Harris Corporation worked with us to deliver a quality product incorporating a careful, step-by-step implementation program.
- I can't overemphasize how important new automated systems such as VSCS are to the NAS architecture. The numbers tell our story. On average, FAA air traffic controllers handle two flights per second, every minute, every hour, 365 days a year. We are one of the few non-defense government services that operates 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

- Our highly skilled technicians and engineers keep over 30,000 pieces of sophisticated electronics equipment up and running without interruption. Thanks to their hard work, the air traffic control system today is 99.84 percent reliable -- as high as it has ever been.
- Last year, the FAA's centers handled more than 40 million flights. The Kansas City Center alone handled over 1.9 million aircraft operations in fiscal year 1996.
- The Center here in Olathe covers approximately 190,000 square miles, and includes parts of 10 states in the center of the United States. It has 347 controllers and 40 operational sectors.



- I am happy to report that the VSCS came in here on time and on budget. It has received excellent reports and positive responses from the controllers who have worked with the system. It brings tremendous advantages over the old 4-channel equipment.
- This is important because we must prepare now to meet the combined challenges of rapidly changing technologies, limited resources, and unprecedented growth in air travel.
- The FAA's latest forecast for U.S. commercial air carriers predicts overall growth of nearly four percent over the next 12 years. 800 million passengers a year in less than a decade. Nearly *one billion* a year by 2010.

- Moving all those people and aircraft through the skies safely demands crisp, clear communications between controllers and pilots, and among controllers themselves. Safety can be compromised by garbled, choppy, or incomplete messages.
- As a pilot for more than 40 years, I can tell you how important voice communications are -- and how confusing they can be sometimes.
- For too long, we've had to rely on 1950s vintage electro-mechanical technology to perform our air traffic functions. VSCS brings us up to date with state-of-the-art, digital technology that will go a long way toward reducing delays and benefiting the region's economy.



- The beauty of VSCS is that it is a system for today and tomorrow. It helps us immediately by providing greater capacity and capabilities than the current system. It also is flexible enough to incorporate technology advances into the 21st century. We cannot forget that new technology is the lifeblood of competitiveness in our industry.
- But VSCS is more than just a technology success story. The entire VSCS team, both FAA and Harris employees, put in long hours to get us where we are today. They've demonstrated the highest levels of dedication and professionalism.
- Kansas City Center, in collaboration with Harris and the VSCS program office, worked closely together to make sure VSCS met its milestones along the way.

- I'm confident that the government/industry team we have in place will continue to meet their schedule and cost timeliness as efficiently as they've done so far.
- I would like to recognize the professionalism and dedication of our air traffic and airway facility personnel who work day in and day out to achieve an outstanding safety record -- as well as operational efficiencies.
- Both technical and fiscal challenges lie ahead. But I believe that six months from now, in February, 1997, we will have the entire VSCS system fully commissioned and serving the American traveling public. They expect -- and deserve -- the best and safest airspace system in the world.
- And that's exactly what the FAA delivers.



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