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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

STATEMENT OF JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION OF THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, MONDAY, MARCH 1, 1971.

Mr. Chairman, the subject we are discussing here today is not new to any of us here in this room. The SST development program has been progressing for nearly ten years and is now nearing its final stage which will culminate in two flying prototype aircraft. All of us have been deeply involved in the serious analysis and debate which has been such an important part of this program. I believe that our discussions have served the purpose of insuring that the final outcome of this program will be in line with the desires of this nation.

The appeal I make to you today is as sincere an appeal as I have ever made in the 20 years since I entered public service. I want you to know that what I say here comes from the heart and the soul. It represents my deepest convictions. It is devoid of politics. It comes from my concern for the future of my country and its position in the world of nations.

Today, I want to come to grips with the real issues before us. I am here to seek your approval for the continued funding of this program for the development of two supersonic transport experimental test planes -- two prototype aircraft against which performance claims can be measured and environmental concerns weighed. I request your approval of a funding level for FY 1971 which will allow completion of the program on its planned schedule at minimum cost.

When I appeared before this Committee a year ago, I was convinced that the continuation of the SST program was of critical importance to the future of our country.

Today, that conviction is stronger than ever. Events of the past year have fortified my belief that American technology and American know-how and determination are equal to the task of building a supersonic transport which is compatible with the world's environment -- a transport which must be built if this great nation of ours is to keep pace with the future. Bill Magruder, our Director of Supersonic Transport Development, and other highly expert witnesses will go into the details of our technical progress during the past 12 months. But let me say here that problems which some said were insurmountable a year ago now are being solved. We are moving ahead in complete accord with the faith most of us have had in the American ability for progress.

Our past discussions have raised many questions concerning various aspects of this program. Questions concerning economic feasibility, effect on the environment and national priorities are perhaps among the most important in our minds. I sincerely believe that we are now in a position to answer each of these questions, based on factual data, so that there should remain no doubt as to the wisdom of proceeding with this prototype development phase to its conclusion. I am confident that the

Congress will reach this decision on the basis of facts to be presented here, rather than on the basis of unsupported charges and what has become at times almost hysterical sloganeering.

It has seemed to me that I could hardly pick up a newspaper these last few months without reading about some new charge of the dire consequences to our planet which would result from the flight of supersonic transports. It is charged that they would blot out the sun, melt the ice caps, shatter our eardrums, cause skin cancer, and disturb animal life to the extent that some species would cease reproduction. Let me state categorically that this program will cause none of these things to occur. This program will, in fact, provide the best means for determining whether large numbers of supersonic transports will cause such problems and also provide us the opportunity to prevent any possible damage to this planet.

I have spent enough years in public life to know that charges of this type are inevitable in any new program which stretches man's abilities to exist on this earth. And, history is replete with similar situations. There were cries of disaster or economic upheaval whenever new devices were introduced into our society. The sewing machine, the steamboat, the automobile, the airplane -- they all brought out similar opposition. Cries of "get a horse" greeted the drivers of our first automobiles as they chugged down our streets. There is some of that "get a horse"

philosophy in today's opposition to the SST as some critics say they want to stop the SST in order to preserve our natural environment.

That is not to say that some of the concerns expressed are not legitimate and valid. We have recognized these. As a matter of fact, our entire SST research program is designed to test such concerns under the scrutiny of our best research and technology.

As you know, I have taken and will continue to take strong positions against any transportation program or project which I feel would cause irreparable damage to our citizens, either on environmental, social, or economic grounds. I am not one to pursue progress simply for the sake of progress. What we have is a well balanced program of progress which is planned to prevent any adverse side effects.

Now, let me point out specifically why I feel this to be the case.

First, there is no question that the SST will be the most productive aircraft ever built. It will do the work of three of the new tri-jets or two of the big 747's. This will have the very real effect of providing our airlines with a more efficient aircraft to meet the continuously increasing demand for air transportation. The operation of an aircraft which will do more work per unit of cost can only result in a more solid financial base for the airline industry as a whole. I might add here that this same attribute of higher productivity will also make a major contribution towards reducing the crowding of our skies. It will take fewer planes to meet the air travel demands and thus have a favorable impact on the reduction of air congestion and the resulting side effects caused by this situation.

Suppose we had stopped building bigger and faster planes 30 years or so ago and had decided to go along with the DC-3. It was a good plane. It would go fast enough.

For example, we now have 3,000 transports in our air passenger fleet. To do with DC-3's the job that is being done today would require 47,000 planes instead of 3,000. By 1980 we would need 145,000 DC-3's, and by 1985 we would need nearly 200,000.

Second, the SST development program represents the advance cutting edge of civilian flight technology. In this field, you either win or you're not in the race at all. You stay out in front or you drop far behind. The United States is currently leading in aerospace technology. It is just inconceivable to me that this country would purposely forfeit first place in the area of civil aviation.

This technological leadership leads directly to my third point. And that is the economic viability of the SST, and in fact our entire airframe industry. Unless we maintain our lead, our competitors will quickly take the market away from us. I would remind you that the Russians and the British and French are breathing down our necks. The British French Concorde is flying. A second generation Concorde may already be on the drawing boards. The Russian TU-144 is flying. What more warning do we need than the two page ad in a recent issue of Aviation Week magazine. This ad, as you can see shows the Russian "family of airplanes" -- led by the supersonic TU-144.

In the upcoming March 8 issue of the same magazine, the Russians again have a two page ad on the TU-144. And the caption reads, "If you are doing business in the worldwide aerospace market, do not make a purchasing decision before contacting us."

I assure you that they mean business. They intend to sell these planes in the world market. And so do the British and French with their Concorde. The President of a foreign airline recently told me that he would not buy the British-French Concorde unless we fail to build our SST. The reason was that he wanted the whole family of planes in his airline to come from one nation, and for that he is willing to wait for the American SST. If we do not build the SST, however, that foreign airline president knows that other families of airplanes will be available from other nations.

Without the SST, this country will be unable to provide a complete family of planes. Our share of the world aircraft market will deteriorate. It is hardly necessary for me to repeat what this will mean in terms of jobs and balance of payment -- 50,000 direct jobs and a \$22 billion impact on balance of payments over a 12 year period spanning the 1980's.

Our SST, incidentally, is designed to fly 400 mph faster than the Concorde or the TU-144 and to carry more than twice as many passengers. Our aircraft is a more economically viable machine than either of our

competitors' and would therefore maintain U. S. leadership not only for this plane but for the entire family of planes. I would emphasize that our design does not face the same questions of economic viability which have been raised regarding the Concorde. Our design will produce the kind of air transport which the airlines need. For this reason, the recent questions about the Concorde are relevant to our program only insofar as a delay in the Concorde program would have a favorable impact on increased demand for our own SST.

I also wish to point out what this airplane will accomplish in terms of bringing the world closer together -- from the standpoint of trade, education, and social interchange. The old description of the "jet-set" as the only international travelers just does not apply any more. The international jet market is as large as it is diversified. As a matter of fact, projections show that by 1985 as many people will fly the North Atlantic as flew everywhere in the free world in 1970. That's a mighty big jet-set.

International travel is now a matter of necessity in the conduct of business. Companies today are international in scope and must hop oceans and continents to remain competitive. The SST will provide the added ability to make international business and trade as quick and efficient as that within our own borders.

Beyond these economic interests, the SST will have dramatic effects on the educational and social structures of the world. Consider that with the SST no point on the earth will be longer than 12 hours away from any

other point. Our young people, who are increasingly world citizens, will have the cheapest and fastest transportation available to travel easily throughout the world. Hopefully, the nations of the world will be brought together as never before through peaceful social interchange, made convenient and acceptable by SST flight.

My next point concerns the environmental aspects of this program which have generated perhaps the most heated controversy. First, let me put our program in perspective. We plan to build two test planes -- not a fleet, as some would have you believe. This is a prime example of the "fly-before-you-buy principal." These two aircraft will in no way cause harm to our environment.

Secondly, at the same time we have an ongoing program of environmental research. Bill Magruder will detail these programs for you later. They are aimed at evaluating -- and determining before the facts, not afterwards -- any adverse effects on our environment that might occur from extensive supersonic flight operations.

As you know, FAA rule-making and Congressional legislation, both now pending, would prevent flight overland at boom-producing speeds. Already we know that the SST will be less noisy to the human ear on takeoff and landing than current intercontinental jets. And just last week our noise abatement committee was able to announce that sideline noise -- the noise generated while the plane is on the ground at the airport -- can be brought within the noise limitations required for new subsonic jets -- a significant reduction from the noise levels typical of jet operations today.

Thus, we have already overcome what until recently was a major concern. We are confident that if Congress enables us to move forward with the program we will resolve the remaining concerns just as successfully. Needless to say, if we stop the program we will never know the answers to these pressing questions.

Never in the history of aviation, or any other mode of transportation, has a new machine been subjected to the amount of pre-flight study, research, planning and evaluation as our two SST prototypes. We are confident that enlightened American technology can overcome any problems that might develop. After all, a country which can send men to the moon at the same time it preserves the Everglades, a country that transmits color TV pictures from space at the same time it says no to super highways through historic sites, can be counted on to overcome possible problems with the SST.

But I want to reiterate one thing I've said again and again. And I mean it. If testing of the two prototypes or the concurrent environmental research show that the SST will do irreparable harm to our environment, I will do everything possible to ensure that a U. S. SST does not fly in commercial service -- and this is a commitment I make on behalf of this Administration.

All evidence indicates that our SST's now in development can fly within our increasingly stringent environmental limits. But we must complete the two prototypes and conduct the tests to be sure.

To stop the prototype development now would leave to foreign interests the experimentation and the final decision on whether SST fleets can be put into the air without serious damage to the earth's environment. It seems strange to me that those persons in this country who oppose the supersonic transports would be content to leave such an important decision to foreign countries interested in supersonic flight.

Finally, the last major point that must be emphasized is that this program is now two thirds complete. We are nearing our goal of providing two flying prototypes which will verify for us as nothing else can the technical, economic, and environmental viability of the supersonic transport. The final answers in all these areas simply cannot be determined by more study, more component testing, or more ivory tower discussions. The only way to tell what needs to be known before such an aircraft can be flown commercially is to fly the prototypes and conduct an extensive test program. We are now ten years along this path. The U. S. Government has invested more than \$860 million out of a total investment of \$1.3 billion. Private industry -- contractors and airlines -- has presently invested more than \$246 million out of its committed total investment of \$403 million. We have gone too far, invested too much, and are too near our goal to let this all go down the drain with no tangible results.

This year we are asking for \$290 million, which represents approximately three percent of our total Department of Transportation budget. Funding at lesser levels will increase total costs and increase development time. With significantly decreased funding, the experienced teams of scientists, designers and engineers working on this program would be disbanded. Thus, the program would suffer irreparable damage. The team of subcontractors would undoubtedly be dissolved and the U. S. Government would be faced with contract termination costs. To save the few dollars this year would in my opinion be counterproductive. This is a program which, unlike many others, is on schedule within cost and faces no insurmountable technical problems. We cannot and should not disrupt it by shaving off a few dollars in the name of economy. This, Mr. Chairman, is truly false economy.

Mr. Chairman, with your concurrence I would like to ask Bill Magruder to elaborate on some of the more recent developments and achievements in our program. Let me close with this final thought. This is the moment of decision for this program, and in a larger sense for this Nation's entire attitude toward the advancement of technology. As we stand on the threshold of commercial supersonic flight, we can decide either to keep or throw away this country's aviation leadership. We can decide to shrink from our responsibility to find the real answers on environmental effects, or we can proceed to conduct the necessary flight tests to find solutions. And this decision rests with you in the Congress.

Your decision will not be judged by those who harbor some sort of national death-wish which seeks to destroy this country's technology and profit-making free enterprise.

Instead gentlemen, the final judgment of your decision will be made a decade from now -- in the 1980's, the decade of supersonic flight. Hopefully, the basis for that judgment will be the final findings of American research and development during the 1970's.

The choice is yours. And history will judge the course which this Congress takes during the next 30 days. This Administration has not wavered in its support of the SST. We are supporting, in the strongest way possible, a bipartisan decision made by four United States Presidents, a decision to build and test two experimental planes. We do not shrink from our responsibilities. We look forward to finding answers, not withdrawing from our search.

These two prototype aircraft will help us find answers to many questions about civil supersonic flight. They will put performance and economic objectives to the test. And in concert with an intensive program of environmental research, exchange comprehension for apprehension and answer fears with facts.

Even at current production rates, no commercial SST's will be moving down the runways until 1978. We cannot afford to further delay this program. We already know, for example, that stoppage of this program

by 1978 would result in aviation work-force reductions totaling nearly a half million persons per year. The annual adverse impact on balance of trade would total 1 to 1.5 billion dollars per year.

To sum up -- we are in the process of building two of the best airplanes ever conceived by the most capable aeronautical experts in history. We are well down the road to construction of prototypes. A large segment of the American economy is at stake. A key segment of our future transportation system is at stake. The American aviation industry is at stake. U. S. technology is being called to account, yet may not be allowed to find answers if the prototypes are not built.

Gentlemen, I submit that this Committee, and this Congress should support progress, should encourage logical and reasonable testing, and should support the continuation of the SST program at the most efficient pace practical.