

STATEMENT OF JOHN A. VOLPE, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1971.

Mr. Chairman, the Supersonic Transport Development Program has endured a penetrating national scrutiny. Never in the history of this nation has a technological advancement been so critically assessed by government, by scientists, by political leaders and by the American people.

I applaud that kind of careful evaluation. And, I would like to consider myself among the vanguard that has weighed development of the SST against all possible detrimental effects. I am confident that this Administration's decision to continue the SST program is a correct one, and an essential one. As you and the Committee enter this latest phase of your deliberations over this program, Mr. Chairman, I once again appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to present the reasons for that decision.

Before getting to that presentation, however, I would like to make a personal observation that I feel deserves recognition. It is that the national debate over the SST program is one of the healthiest exercises in democracy that I have seen. Everyone has benefitted from that debate. Our program is now far superior to that originally envisioned. The nation is far more informed and involved than ever before.

Unfortunately, we have reached the point in these discussions where little of substance has not been said before. It now seems that

the catch phrases and slogans and the more sensational and scary scientific testimony are all that remain which is new "news".

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to proceed to the real issues before us.

I am here today to ask that this vital development program be advanced to fruition. I am here to seek your approval for the continued funding of 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 fiscal year 1971 which will allow completion of the program on its planned schedule at minimum cost.

To begin, I want to clear up all confusion concerning the relationship between our prototype development program and our environmental research efforts. The two are inexorably related. This is a package program aimed at providing all the information necessary to make a commercial production decision.

That means that we must know every technological and engineering ramification of the SST in flight. It means that we must know every environmental ramification. And while many of these environmental answers can be provided through basic research, they must be related to the actual test plane before any fully confident decision can be made on commercial production.

The SST program provides a unique opportunity for technological development in concert with technological assessment. We must build the prototypes and undertake the environmental research.

For example, our research indicated some time ago that side-line noise would be a problem. We didn't stop the program because of it, however. And now, through continued technological development, that problem is being solved. I am convinced that continued prototype development, together with the accompanying research, can resolve all the environmental concerns that have been expressed.

I have spent enough years in public life to know that charges of impending disaster are inevitable in any new program which stretches man's abilities to exist on this earth. There were cries of disaster or economic upheaval whenever new devices were introduced into our society. Brigadier General "Chuck" Yeager, first test pilot to break the sound barrier in 1947, was told by "experts" before his historic flight that he would "disintegrate" or become a "vegetable" or that his "bone marrow might demineralize."

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 threatens to cause irreparable damage to our citizens on environmental, social, or economic grounds. I am not one to pursue technical advancement for its own sake. What we have with the SST 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 about 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 toward reducing the crowding of our skies, because fewer planes will be needed to meet air travel demands.

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 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 the Russians, the French and the British are neither frivolous nor foolish. They intend to sell their planes in the world market. The President of a foreign airline recently told me that he would buy the British French Concorde only if 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 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 the nation's economy--50,000 jobs directly related to SST production and a \$22 billion impact on balance of trade 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 more attractive to the airlines as a revenue earner than

either of our competitors and would therefore maintain U.S. leadership not only for this plane, but for the entire family of planes.

Let me at this point answer directly the questions frequently raised about the real interest of our nation's airlines in our SST program. We have received letters of support for the SST from every major American international airline. Many of these airlines are now making their positions known publicly. I am confident that there can be no question remaining concerning the airline industry's support of our SST program and their reasons for that support.

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 international routes as flew everywhere in the free world in 1970. That's a mighty big jet set.

By way of contrast, it is interesting to note that in the Russian-made film glorifying the development of the TU-144, the narrator makes a very strong point that the benefits of this plane will be available to "us--the common people." During these current hearings, your Committee will have an opportunity to see this film, which is currently being shown to the Russian people, as well as to prospective TU-144 purchasers.

How ironic it is that the Russians make their pitch to the common people, and we in the United States hear that the SST will benefit only

"the few." Fortunately, four Administrations have recognized the true extent of the benefits and beneficiaries of this program and have rejected this simplistic view.

Equally as fortunate, such views have been rejected in the past. Just the other day someone brought to my attention a 1909 article entitled, "The Panama Canal As A Business Venture." The question was posed: "What does the building of the Panama Canal by the United States mean to the citizens of the Country?" The article concluded: "The proper answer would seem to be as follows. An enormous sum, probably amounting to at least one half a billion of dollars, is to be taken from the pockets of two generations of taxpayers, in order to confer a slight benefit on the shippers of merchandize between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans."

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" principle. 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, aimed at evaluating--and determining before the fact, not afterward--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 two weeks ago 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.

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 SSTs now in development can fly within our increasingly stringent environmental limits. But we must complete the prototype program and conduct sufficient 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 already committed to 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 accomplished too much, 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. That, Mr. Chairman, would truly be false economy.

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 conduct the necessary flight tests to find solutions. And this decision rests with you in the Congress.

The choice is yours. And history will judge the course which this Congress takes during the next 20 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 SSTs will be moving down the runways until 1978. We cannot afford to further delay this program. We already know, for example, that the stoppage of this program now, combined with the anticipated substantial sales losses from our total family of aircraft, would result in total work-force reductions of about one-half a million persons by 1978. The annual adverse impact on balance of trade would total 1.5 to 2 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.

