

Coast Guard Always Ready to Fly VIP

By Jack Anderson

"Semper paratus," the Coast Guard motto, means "always ready." Lately, it has meant "always ready" to fly government bigwigs around in pleasure planes.

We have written in the past about the Coast Guard's Grumman Gulfstream II, executive jetliner and Gulfstream I propjet. Both are gleaming white on the outside with plush interiors befitting Aristotle Onassis.

The jetliner is used by Transportation Secretary John Volpe, the Coast Guard's boss, as his personal plane. When he is seized with the urge to see the Paris Air Show or visit the Spanish Riviera, he is whisked in his government limousine to the ramp of his Coast Guard jet, then is flown in style wherever he may yearn to go.

Thus, he avoids the transportation problems he is supposed to solve for the millions of less-blessed Americans.

But we had no idea how many congressmen and cabinet members have received the same VIP service until we were shown the logs for the two Coast Guard planes. The secret passenger roster reads like Who's Who in Washington.

Some of the flights appear to be vaguely official but economically questionable. It costs more than \$650 an hour to keep the jet in the air,

more than \$300 an hour to fly the propjet.

VIP Passengers

One frequent passenger is Rep. Frank Bow (R-Ohio), a power on the House Appropriations Committee, who is given to loud complaints about government spending. But not a whimper has been heard from him about the high cost of the Coast Guard pleasure flights.

The logs show that the Coast Guard has flown Bow to or from Florida seven times, not to mention a trip home to Ohio, all at the taxpayers' expense. He advised us his trips have always been on official business, although he serves on no subcommittees dealing with the Coast Guard. He has a hideaway apartment near Miami, however, where he sojourns in the sun.

The champion junketeer, according to the logs, has been Rep. Frank Clark (D-Pa.), who used the Coast Guard planes no less than 11 times. Other multiple users, some for jaunts back to their home districts, included Reps. Silvo Conte, (R-Mass.), Ed Garmatz (D-Md.), James Grover (R-N.Y.) and Walter Jones (D-N.C.).

The Coast Guard was just as ready to chauffeur Senators around the skies. Among those who received the VIP service were Sens. Gordon Allott, (R-Colo.), Caleb Boggs (R-Del.), Norris Cotton (R-N.H.), Robert Griffin (R-Mich.), Russell Long (D-La.), Ed Muskie (D-Maine),

William Spong (D-Va.), John Stennis, (D-Miss.), and Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).

\$20,000 Junket

When Volpe isn't using the luxury jetliner himself, he may lend it to his fellow cabinet members. Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans, for example, used the Coast Guard executive plane to fly him on a work-play junket to Latin America and Jamaica. The taxpayers were stuck with a \$20,000 transportation bill.

Two former cabinet members, ex-Interior Secretary Wally Hickel and ex-Treasury Secretary David Kennedy, were also flown around by the Coast Guard. Florida's ex-Gov. Claude Kirk's name also appears on the flight logs.

Once, the propjet was used to fly a container full of "lunar samples" to Groton, Conn.

The kicker: Despite the wholesale pleasure junketing, the Coast Guard asked the White House for another luxury plane, explaining that the "existing executive aircraft are not able to fully provide the transportation necessary for official Coast Guard use." The White House quietly said "no."

Washington Whirl

Palace Guard—Liberal GOP legislators, who can't gain President Nixon's ear to argue their viewpoints, tend to blame his palace guard. The

truth, according to intimates, is that the President dislikes personal confrontations and has instructed his staff not to admit opposition Republicans who merely want to argue with him. He prefers to study the opposition arguments in writing. Since he has considered every argument they could possibly raise, Mr. Nixon feels it would be pointless to listen to his liberal critics go over the same ground.

Intimidating Congress—Rep. Wayne Hays (D-Ohio) sounded off behind closed congressional doors the other day about FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover's alleged intimidation tactics. "I am somewhat concerned about possible intimidation," he told his colleagues at a secret session of the House Administration Committee. "I don't know whether you read Newsweek, and it may or may not be true, but it says J. Edgar Hoover had a habit of calling up certain members and saying, 'Senator, I want you to know that the files we have on you I have called in so that every Tom, Dick and Harry can't look at them. I have them in my office under my eye. I want you to know we are treating you in a special category.' I suppose if that ever happened to me, I would have gotten the message . . . I don't want anything to arise where members can be intimidated in any way, shape or form."