

Text of Coleman Statement About Concorde

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 — Following is the text of the opening statement by the Secretary of Transportation, William T. Coleman Jr. at the news conference where he announced that the Concorde would be allowed to fly into two United States airports for a 16-month trial period:

Few decisions I have made as Secretary of Transportation have caused me greater concern than this one. How could anyone, no matter what the objective statistics show, not be concerned about any increase in the noise levels around John F. Kennedy and Dulles?

But at the same time, who—placed in a position of decision rather than advocacy—could confidently take it upon himself to treat the aircraft of our allies worse than other nations have historically treated ours, and singlehandedly to close the door on what is at least potentially an extremely significant technological advance?

Perhaps my greatest worry, however, is that those who are disappointed by this decision will conclude that because their will did not prevail, the democratic process had somehow failed. That is why I have struggled so long to make the opinion I have distributed reflect what is in fact the case, that everyone's concerns were taken seriously in an honest attempt to reach a decision that is as fair as possible to all concerned, but that also expresses what is in the public interest that we all struggle to define.

A Difficult Decision

One cannot hide from decision because decision is difficult, however, and after careful deliberation, I have decided for the reasons set forth in detail in the opinion to permit British Airways and Air France to conduct limited scheduled commercial flights into the United States for a trial period not to exceed 16 months under certain limitations and restrictions.

I am therefore directing the F.A.A. administrator, subject to any additional requirements he would impose for safety reasons or other concerns within his jurisdiction, to order provisional amendment of the operations specifications of British Airways and Air France to permit those carriers, for a period of no longer than 16 months from the commencement of limited commercial service, to conduct up to two Concorde flights per day into JFK by each carrier, and one Concorde flight per day into Dulles by each carrier.

These amendments may be revoked at any time upon four months' notice, or immediately in the event of an emergency deemed harmful to the health, welfare

or safety of the American people.

1. No flight may be scheduled for landing or take-off in the United States before 7 A.M. local time of after 10 P.M. local time.

2. Except where weather or other temporary emergency conditions dictate otherwise, the flights of British Airways must originate from Heathrow Airport and those of Air France must originate from Charles de Gaulle Airport.

3. Authorization of any commercial flights in addition to those specifically permitted by this action shall constitute a new major Federal action within the terms of the National Environmental Policy Act and therefore require a new environmental impact statement.

4. In accordance with F.A.A. regulations, the Concorde may not fly at supersonic speed over the United States or any of its territories.

5. The F.A.A. is authorized to impose such additional noise abatement procedures as are safe, technologically feasible, and necessary to minimize the noise impact, including, but not limited to the thrust cut-back on departure.

I am also directing the F.A.A. to proceed with a proposed high altitude pollution program, to produce the data base necessary for the development of national and international regulation of aircraft operations in the stratosphere.

I herewith also direct the F.A.A. to set up monitoring systems at JFK and Dulles to measure noise and emission levels and to report the results thereof to the Secretary of Transportation on a monthly basis. These reports will be made public within 10 days of receipt.

I shall also request President Ford to instruct the Secretary of State to enter into immediate negotiations with France and Great Britain so that an agreement that will establish a monitoring system for measuring ozone levels in the stratosphere can be concluded among the three countries within three months. The data obtained from such monitoring shall be made public at least every six months.

I shall also request the Secretary of State to initiate discussions through the international civil aviation organization and the world meteorological organization on the development of international stratospheric standards for the SST.

It is an understatement to say this has not been an easy decision. I am aware it will be unpopular in some quarters: indeed, I doubt it will meet with unalloyed acclaim in any quarter. But it has been made openly and in accordance with our democratic traditions.

The text of the opinion states in great detail the rea-

sons for my action. I do not believe it is unfair to ask that your attention and analysis be devoted to the entire document as you exercise your various responsibilities. If I have any request, it is that those who are inclined to be critical would read the opinion in its entirety and also study the material cited therein that bears on their particular concerns.

For there is danger here, as in so many public controversies, that theories set forth as facts may persist even after the actual facts establish the contrary. I do not mean to suggest that emotion is entirely out of order.

Emotion, surely compassion, has a rightful place in great decisions as well as small. But uninformed emotion is not an appropriate basis for decision. We have a common obligation to seek out the facts and to explain them rationally and fairly.

I have in the opinion discussed at length the benefits of admitting the Concorde, both in terms of technological advancement and in terms of promoting international fairness and understanding. They are substantial. I have discussed, at even greater length, the Concorde's environmental costs, of which at least airport noise must count as a serious concern.

Those who ask us to pay much more attention to the environment have taught us a valuable lesson. Also, a society might be better off in the long run if we did not always equate progress with doing something faster. Restraint and time for leisure are also high values for a civilized person.

But there is so much on both sides of the equation that we do not know and cannot know without observing the Concorde in actual commercial operations into the United States that a firm decision at this time either to admit or to ban the Concorde would be irresponsible, a reaction to the flurry of publicity that has preceded its arrival or an attempt to curry favor with one or another constituency. If we would seek the truth about a number of the controversial questions that surround this airplane, we must gain some practical experience.

I am not saying that a demonstration will not itself carry some cost in terms of airport noise. Of course it will. But the adverse consequences of a limited and controlled demonstration are worth the benefit that would accrue to the American people from observing first hand the commercial application of this technology.

It will enable us to evaluate whether the SST is commercially viable, whether the consumer is willing to pay the additional cost for the

reduced travel time, the extent to which fatigue and jet lag are reduced and the advantages for international commerce.

It will also permit further assessment of the environmental impact, measuring noise levels during actual commercial operations, evaluating subjective community response to the Concorde's unique noise characteristics, determining relative fuel efficiency for passenger mile, monitoring air pollution, and enabling stratospheric testing.

The information derived from this demonstration will be invaluable in determining how the technology might be developed to control adverse environmental effects and what United States and international environmental standards are appropriate for the SST. Participation in the international SST route structure will also give the United States a more meaningful role in the international standard development process, particularly concerning the stratosphere.

It may well be that further development of this technology is not economically sensible in the energy and environmentally conscious period in which we live. If so, then the Concorde will fail because it is an anachronism, and its failure will be recognized as such rather than attributed to an arbitrary and protectionist attitude of the United States out of fear that our dominance of the world aeronautical manufacturing market is threatened.

Thus, I have concluded that the benefits of a completely environmentally acceptable and commercially viable SST would be substantial. I am also convinced that that we do not yet have sufficient information upon which to make a judgment about whether such an aircraft could be developed.

Given the substantial effort by the French and British to initiate this technology, and the fact that United States participation may well be essential to the commercial success of the SST, I believe this demonstration is needed to determine whether a commitment to this new technology should be embraced.

I have enough confidence in this nation's environmental commitment and in the objective judgment of the marketplace to be certain that, if the SST does, in fact, become the aircraft of the future, it will only be because man will have developed the technology to meet rational environmental standards and to enable the SST to compete in the marketplace effectively. But, if we fear the Concorde completely, we may be condemning for all time—or delaying for recades—what might be a very significant technological advance for mankind.