

Panel Investigating FAA Resigns

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All three members of a panel investigating the safety role of the Federal Aviation Administration have resigned, saying Transportation Secretary Claude S. Brinegar blocked their ability to do a good job, the former head of the panel said yesterday.

Former Rep. Richard G. Shoup, named chairman of the panel appointed Jan. 4 by FAA chief Alexander Butterfield, blamed a personality clash between Butterfield and Brinegar for the problems his group encountered.

Shoup said that he and the

other two members—David D. Thomas of Washington, a former FAA deputy administrator, and Paul Soderlind of Fishtale, Mont., the former chief pilot for Northwest Airlines—submitted a joint letter of resignation just five days after their appointment.

Brinegar, meanwhile, has resigned as Transportation Secretary effective Feb. 1.

Butterfield named the panel in the wake of a congressional report that was highly critical of the FAA's role in aviation safety. He ordered the group to come up with recommendations to correct "any deficien-

cies in the FAA from the point of safety," Shoup said.

"After we had started work," Shoup said in a telephone interview, "The Secretary of the Department of Transportation (Brinegar) limited the scope of our investigation to making sure the dates and times in the congressional report were correct.

"He also said he would name his own panel to investigate the things we were looking into. We felt we could not do anything to contribute to the safety of the flying public under those limitations and that we would just waste the taxpayers' money because we were so hampered."

Shoup, who lost his seat as a Montana Republican congressman in the November elections, served for the past four years on the House Commerce Committee, which oversees aviation matters. For the last two of those four years he was on the committee's Aviation Subcommittee.

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