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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

ACTION  
Aircraft Hijacking

September 10, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

Attached at Tab A is an outline of the program which can be announced by you to deter future hijacking of U.S. aircraft.

Attached at Tab B is a draft of a Presidential Statement on this program.

(This program was developed at a series of September 9 meetings of all relevant agencies in the White House and was approved by all participants at a September 9 meeting of industry representatives at the FAA. The program has specifically been approved by the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury and Transportation, the FAA, the CAB, the Airline Pilots Association of America, the Air Transport Association (made up of domestic airlines), the Deputy Director of IATA (made up of international airlines) and TWA and Pan American. The International Federation of Airline Pilots Associations has opposed guards on airplanes on the basis of which Attorney General Mitchell has indicated reservations)

The four major problems relating to the program are:

- (1) how extensive will be the use of armed guards,
- (2) who will pay the costs,
- (3) what will be the timing and the detail of the announcement, and
- (4) what potential liability will the Federal Government incur.

(1) The U.S. airlines employ 2300 crews to service international flights (excluding Canada). To put guards on all these flights, assuming an average of 2 1/2 per plane, would require 7,750 men. A substantially larger number of crews than domestic flights which are capable of being hijacked, as proven by the domestic TWA flight hijacked to Italy. The FAA is designing a distribution pattern for guard use, which will be relatively heavy for flights susceptible to hijacking and light for non-susceptible flights.

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(2) Fares on international flights are set by IATA, and no tax is charged on these fares. If the U.S. international airlines are able to get IATA approval for a fare increase to cover the cost of guards, they will be charging a rate higher than their competitors. Because the U.S. is a prime target of Arab hijackers due to its support of Israel, Pan Am and TWA believe they will lose a substantial portion of their international traffic in any event. Both airlines are currently operating at a loss, and are in no position to carry the cost of guards or to unilaterally increase the cost of service.

Secretary Laird is of the opinion that the Congress will not allow this cost to be borne by the general revenues, in that it is for the benefit of the minority who travel by air. Bryce Harlow, while skeptical about the program, disagrees with Laird's conclusions but recommends that Congressional leaders be checked with on this point.

(3) TWA and Pan Am strongly urge that no Presidential announcement be made until the deterrent system is in place. They fear that the hijack teams, if alerted that guards are going to be put on planes in the near future, will attempt additional hijackings immediately. The airlines will need only one day to indoctrinate the 125 available trained agents, and the agents can be on international flights by the weekend. A Presidential announcement Friday afternoon should meet the airlines' requirement.

Because the initial guard contingent will be relatively small, because all flights will never be covered, because we may wish to phase the program out quietly, and because its effectiveness depends on secrecy, no details on the guard program should ever be made public beyond your initial announcement.

(4) The U.S. Government may be liable for substantial claims as a result of the guard program. If a guard injures a passenger, or a plane is lost, suits will be brought against the Federal Government. The Justice Department is currently considering the extent of this possible liability and ways to limit it.

I recommend that you:

Authorize Congressional contacts regarding financing of armed guards.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_