

April 10. 1965
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Honorable Henry B. Gonzalez
House of Representatives
Washington. D. C. File

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Dear Representative Gonzalez:

Your letter of March 31st gave me more hope than I have had for a long time. To find someone who knows what is going on within the Federal Aviation Agency is no problem. They are all over the agency and elsewhere. But to find someone who not only knows, but who wants to do something about it is the best news that I have had in a long time. The section of the Federal Aviation Agency that I believe is in the worst shape, and which is effecting the traveling public and the large

American aviation scene is the Flight Standards Branch, especially as it pertains to air carriers. Here we are dealing with many intangibles of safety and here is where the greatest number of misfits, incompetents, and unqualified management personnel exist.

Fear, lack of integrity, lack of backbone, inability to understand the requirements of today's jet aviation scene is causing the Federal Aviation Agency to become more of an obstruction than an aid to Aviation in certain areas.

Instead of encouraging inspectors to seek hidden safety efficiencies, they are criticized for attempting to correct major safety deficiencies existing. The inspectors are criticized for submitting reports on safety deficiencies, attempting to follow Washington guidelines.

There is so much to be done to improve safety deficiencies that exist. Most of these do not mean expenditure of funds but rather a better approach to improving safety deficiencies. Vast amounts of manpower and womanpower is wasted in the Federal Aviation Agency today. Management is more concerned with tangible evidences of their work, such as colorful SPUR progress boards and violations. These can be measured in numbers. The intangible requirements of safety are beyond the ability of these FAA management personnel in many cases. They are often more interested in a state of tranquilly and therefore prevent corrective actions of unsafe practices on the part of the air carrier to avoid the "ripples" that develop. Accident investigation occurs infrequently and is a desirable risk.

Probably the most deplorable conditions that will best illustrate the conditions within Federal Aviation Agency would be found in the Denver Air Carrier District Office and the Western Region of Flight Standards.

The Western Region based air carriers, with control of the safety standards by the Federal Aviation Agency in this region, have had the most major aircraft disaster, both in number and magnitude. This is not simply by accident.

The two major DC-8 accidents of a certain air carrier have their base of operations in Denver. One of the accidents was the catastrophic accident over New York City. The primary reason for this accident was poor judgment on the part of the captain. The same weakness exists today that existed then, in the program that can lead to the same catastrophic disaster.

While the fault is with the air carrier, the greatest fault is with the Federal Aviation Agency. The inspectors have job functions and responsibilities. As industry personnel tell us, we have the responsibility but no authority. Local irresponsible management prevents taking corrective actions.

The program that contributed these two major DC-8 accidents to the American public is known to be a weak program. It was weak when the New York City accident happened, and is weak today.

When government safety inspectors attempt to correct the shortcomings, as they are authorized and expected to do, they are removed from flight checks, they are criticized, denied promotions. Why, they are ripple makers and ripple makers disturb the tranquility and the cozy relationship with certain airlines.

Several examples to give you a rough idea of the attitudes that prevails:

I made an enroute inspection on a small air carrier called Paradise Airlines. Glaring deficiencies were evident that indicated unsafe marginal practices. I reported that the chief pilot and owner of the air carrier was lax in his operation and his flying was in marginal VFR conditions in high mountainous terrain.

I was shortly thereafter criticized for the report. That was the only apparent interest by the principal inspector who is in charge of the safety standards of the "air carrier. About 1 ½ years later, the same deficiency of that same chief pilot, flying in marginal VFR conditions, cost 84 lives.

I made an enroute inspection on a Boeing jet aircraft which ended with the pilot almost crashing during a low-visibility night approach to the San Francisco airport, requiring the controls being taken over by his copilot.

No fault is placed on the pilot himself as he found himself in a condition that is not clearly described in the program at that airline that is thoroughly inadequate and shocking. At any rate, the copilot had to take over the controls of the aircraft and make a missed approach in marginal weather conditions. The copilot made the next approach and landing. The only response of the Federal Aviation Agency management to my report was to criticize me for being on a Boeing jet instead of a DC-8 jet. But I'm authorized to conduct enroute checks on any airline aircraft. A valuable lesson could have been learned about that incident that will be more valuable now as we go to lower minimums.

This same management individual was the FAA management individual responsible for the safety standards of various airlines during the past This included Northeast Airlines when the air carrier was grounded due to numerous air carrier accidents. A recheck of all their pilots was ordered.

In his new assignment here at Denver, he operated in similar fashion. Inspectors reported unsafe practices to him, including a

dangerous reverse procedure used by a certain airline. This reverse procedure caused directional control difficulties. The warnings were disregarded, as well as other problems. A DC-8 landing in Denver, using this type of reverse procedure, had directional control difficulties, veered off the runway, and 18 people died. The aircraft did have hydraulic problems, but it is very possible directional control difficulties would not have occurred if this reverse procedure had been halted. After 18 people died, the FAA required the change that inspectors had been warning of for a long time.

The same DC-8 jet program that caused the loss of 134 and 18 lives respectively was known to be in very bad shape. I was assigned to the program and was appalled at the magnitude of the safety deficiencies. When I tried to correct them, as required by my job functions and Washington guidelines, I was almost removed from the DC-8 program.

This same program and others have serious safety deficiencies that are waiting only for fate to intervene to cause a serious accident. When a certain weakness was reported that is becoming worse today, associated with improper performance by a crewmember, I reported the fault as primarily due to improper recurrent training, such training deficiencies admitted by many personnel with the company.

Everyone appears to realize it but FAA management. This same FAA management person criticized for reporting the weakness and stated this would reflect poorly upon the FAA (since the FAA had the authority and responsibility to have corrected the situation).

Instead, the flight engineer was violated and fined. This is a tangible item FAA management can understand and can show "progress" by increasing the SPUR board numbers. An innocent victim of poor training was fined, when the trouble was with the FAA not performing as it is authorized and expected to do.

Despite the known weakness on the DC-8 program, known throughout the agency, this same management individual that has been associated with numerous fatal airline crashes still prevents corrective action being taken.

My persistence in doing my job has cost me heavily, and I question whether it is worth it. Other inspectors warn that the only way to get along in the Federal Aviation Agency is to be as inconspicuous as possible, which means doing as little as possible and ignoring safety problems. The agency is years behind the requirements of today's fast-moving jet age. I don't think the agency was ever up with the industry, even in the DC-3 era.

My attempt at improving the existing dangerous conditions by formation of an employee association was the climax. Immediately thereafter I was subject to numerous letters of reprimand, warning, criticism. I and my wife were warned that I and the family would be hurt if I persisted in trying to correct the conditions that existed. I was suspended from the DC-8 program and much progress is being lost as the programs start to slip backwards.

I received numerous spite attacks, such as letters charging me with AWOL and Unexcused Absence when I reported being sick. An FAA doctor was sent to Denver from Los Angeles seeking to discredit my

mental state. I was set up for conditions including insubordination when eight memorandums arrived within a 24-hour period requiring immediate accomplishment of numerous items that could not possibly be accomplished within the given time.

When I was physically unable to finish all of them in the required time period, I was accused of insubordination and suspended for two weeks. It was insane!

This is just one of many areas that prevents the FAA from acting on known safety problems. I am writing this letter to you and enclosing the attachments, merely as a temporary means of providing you with the information you expressed interest in. I am very displeased with the arrangement of the attached material and will try to put it in a more easily understood form. I did not want to risk having you think I did not appreciate your offer. I would like to emphasize that between the two of us, major changes could be made in the Federal Aviation Agent for the welfare of the American aviation scene and reduction in the number of airline crashes. I may need your help to protect me as the FAA knows of my attempts to influence and obtain a hearing on these serious matters.

This coming Thursday, or the following Monday, I will appear at a hearing seeking to present my case of FAA misconduct related to a series of fatal airline crashes. At a cost to me of possibly as much as \$2000, for an attorney, I am trying to present my facts at a FAA hearing.

Earlier, the FAA refused time or facilities to present facts on the serious safety problems. The FAA, in preventing the exposure of these matters, has top legal counsel, probably six to twelve other employees working on the case to prevent my exposure of these conditions. I must present the case by myself, with limited time, due to FAA refusal to allow time to prepare my presentation.

I cannot call on numerous employees who can testify as to what they know or think, as it would put them in the same position I am in. Previous inter-agency investigations were a masterpiece of cover up and they know I have little chance of changing the deep-seated conditions or culture. The very person responsible for existing conditions is the one who must determine the results of such hearing. The results will be obvious. Here is where I had hoped to have a major investigation from the outside, but I apparently had not been successful.

I regret if I have talked too much and given you minimum facts. I will attempt to place the information in a more concise form when this is over. Maybe in about two weeks or so I can get started on it. However, I may decide it is not worth it and merely leave and return to commercial aviation. This Federal Aviation Agency never-never land of frustrations, deceit, lack of integrity, lack of maturity, is difficult to live with when surrounded by people looking for a soft-pillow job.

One man, like yourself, could make a name for himself and achieve considerable self-satisfaction in this project. Even one of our own attorneys stated we need an investigation of the entire FAA with each inspector being contacted and interviewed. That would be fine, but a few key inspections that are not afraid to

speaking out could do it satisfactorily. How can you remove dead wood throughout the civil Service management ranks?

Again, my thanks to you for your interest and desire to help. Call on me anytime for assistance or information, and I hope I can do likewise with you.

Sincerely yours,

Rodney Stich