

March 17, 1965
1860 Applewood Drive
Denver 15, Colorado
237-3286

Honorable Henry B. Gonzalez
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

It appears that you and I have the same goal, and that is to investigate and correct the conditions within the Federal Aviation Agency that are causing preventable airline crashes.

The FAA has made strides in certain tangible areas, such as traffic control, radar assistance, and other aids. The areas that has been responsible for most aircraft accidents and which are today causing numerous near accidents are the many safety intangibles that FAA management is unable or unwilling to address.

The serious threat to the United States aviation scene due to the attitudes and inabilities of management personnel in the Federal Aviation Agency to properly function is real. I know this from first-hand experience. I am a DC-8 jet specialist within the Federal Aviation Agency. My background is Patrol Plane Commander in the U.S. Navy during World War II, captain on several United States and foreign air carriers.

Command pilot ratings on virtually every type of aircraft flown by U.S. air carriers during the past twenty years, including the Convair 880 jet and the Douglas DC-8 jet. Few personnel within the Federal Aviation Agency have my extensive background or experience. Therefore, I feel qualified to make the statements that I do.

Your statements about the near-midair collision problem is correct in my opinion. I have been told recently from reliable sources that pilots are not reporting near-midair incidents due to the repercussions from the agency. The near midair incidents are serious. There are many other conditions existing that are even more serious. The reason why no corrective actions are taken, or let us say, improper corrective actions, is due to the FAA culture.

We are dealing with safety intangibles in this area. Due to the makeup of FAA management personnel in many key safety areas, the primary emphasis is on colorful SPUR progress boards and violations of individual crewmembers. The basic safety requirements are being overlooked, blocked, and damaged. How it can be damaged any more is hard to believe, but it is. Unless something positive is done about it, the consequences will be serious to the U.S. aviation community. I seriously question whether the present FAA management is capable of fulfilling the serious safety responsibilities given to it by the Federal Aviation Act of 1958. The primary fault is with certain irresponsible and/or incompetent management personnel in key safety positions. I am shocked by their irresponsible actions and the deadly consequences of their actions.

Here is a partial list of the conditions that I have encountered:

- Criticism for being on a jet aircraft that almost crashed during an instrument approach to San Francisco airport. (Our presence on the aircraft is part of our safety responsibilities, and it is required to report such incidents, even though they disturb the tranquility of aviation-ignorant management.)
- Criticism of safety inspectors who identify safety problems, which is absolutely required by our job functions.
- Criticism of inspectors for reporting safety problems, being told by management that such reports would make the office—and management—look bad when an office inspection is made subsequent to an airline accident.
- Known major safety shortcomings, or violations, of obvious safety hazards are ignored, with the reporting inspector criticized, denied promotions, etc.
- Engine flamouts, unnecessary emergency descents, and other problems due to flight engineer errors, result in the engineers being punished instead of the known deficient training and competency check programs at United Airlines.
- Inspectors transferred, removed from flight checks, and threatened with suspensions, suspended, poor fitness reports, resulting from FAA management displeasure with the reporting inspector's reports.

The damage to the Federal Aviation Agency's safety functions will become progressively worse. Nothing but a complete change in management personnel with positive changes in attitude and culture must be accomplished as soon as possible. The FAA needs positive, knowledgeable leadership with knowledge of what is actually going on. The doubletalk, never-never land culture must cease.

I have already requested of Senator Monroney his investigation of conditions within the Federal Aviation Agency. I have been encouraged by his correspondence to date, but it is difficult to interest another person by mail.

Many of the most serious safety conditions cannot be described too well by letter. The association between major airline disasters and FAA management interference can best be understood by a thorough examination of the records.

Due to the intangible nature of these unsafe conditions, a determined investigation by knowledgeable, impartial individuals must be accomplished. They must be properly informed or assisted. To this date, I have found it unable to bring about an investigation by the agency itself due to the many cover-ups.

The government has invested over \$100,000 in my jet training during the past two and a half years. Yet, I have been virtually crucified by FAA management for attempting to correct major safety problems that continue to result in airline crashes.

The western region of the FAA is the region in which I am most acquainted. The conditions here have shocked me. I have notified FAA management of my determination to have an investigation. The reaction has been unmerciful abuse and irresponsible conduct.

The association between the problems within the FAA and a series of airline disasters are too great to ignore. I will be glad to

give you additional information, or you may obtain it from Senator Monroney. This is assuming that I do not give up and go back to industry. I would be most willing to cooperate with you in any investigation. A great service could be accomplished for the U.S. aviation community if integrity, intelligence and respect could be put into place.

I admire men with courage and integrity, such as yourself. I do hope that you will realize the seriousness of the conditions within the Federal Aviation Agency and take the necessary corrective steps to change the conditions. Many of today's crashes are a result of the existing conditions. The recent series of airline crashes and those that could occur due to the existing safety problems, deep-seated culture, must be tackled immediately. Who is to do this?

Sincerely yours,

Rodney Stich