

AirTime / Cabin Air Quality Jim

PHILIP MORRIS COMPANIES INC. INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

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TO: DISTRIBUTION

DATE: February 14, 1990

FROM: Amy Millman

SUBJECT: DOT REPORT

Samuel K. Skinner, Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT), transmitted a copy of the report on airline air quality to Congress today. There was no official press release prepared and the Department endorsed none of the report's recommendations. Congress is currently in recess until February 19.

In his transmittal letter, Secretary Skinner summarized the scope of the study and concluded that the study found that exposure to ETS and to cosmic radiation represented a small but demonstrable health risk to passengers and crew. He added that the newly enacted smoking ban on domestic flights should substantially reduce risks due to ETS. The summary, prepared by DOT, highlighted the findings that ETS, in significant concentrations, was evident in the smoking section and to a lesser extent in the surrounding rows or "border regions." Relatively high carbon dioxide levels were also measured but ozone and microbial aerosol levels were found to be insignificant.

While DOT made no recommendations, the summary indicated that a "total ban on smoking was estimated to provide the greatest benefit at least cost." Presumably, improving the ventilation and thus ridding the air of smoke was considered to be too costly a solution. It was noted further that the new smoking ban would substantially accomplish the goal of reducing exposure.

There was no mention by DOT of expanding the smoking ban to international flights, however, the contractor who prepared the report and the panel that reviewed the findings did recommend that all flights taking off and landing in the U.S. should be non-smoking. They reached this conclusion despite the fact that the measurements of ETS concentrations posed a scientifically insignificant cancer risk even for those crew members who spend all their flight time and, in fact, their entire careers in the smoking section of an aircraft.

To put this study in its proper perspective, it was prepared and reviewed by individuals who have a clear bias in favor of a smoking ban and it was conducted in a unique environment; one in which the ventilation is notoriously poor and you find a high density of smokers in a confined space. One would expect that the study would determine that ETS would pose a significant health risk to passengers as well as crew members. Our review of the data shows the risk is negligible and, therefore, substantiates the industry position that ETS is not the problem, that separation of smokers and non-smokers works and that passenger discomfort will remain, even after the total ban becomes effective, because of inadequate ventilation. For example, the data indicated that the high levels of carbon monoxide coupled with unacceptably low humidity can account for passenger discomfort, independent of ETS, and that cosmic radiation poses a much greater health threat. While acknowledging these problems the contractors made no recommendations on how to improve the cabin environment other than to ban smoking.

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Copies of this report were sent to the Authorizing and Appropriations Committees. We understand that staff is reviewing the report and when Congress returns will make recommendations about possible congressional action.

For your information the New York Times of February 14, 1990, carried a front page story on the report in which it highlighted the dangers of cosmic radiation to passengers and crew (copy attached).

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