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To: . Distribution
From: . Gregory R. Scott *GRS*
Subject: . Senate Hearing on Aircraft Cabin Air Quality

Date: November 9, 1983

Cigarette smoking was extensively discussed as an air contaminant at hearings held today on aircraft cabin air quality before the Aviation Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee. The focus of the hearings was a bill sponsored by Senator Inouye (D-HI) directing the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a study to determine the adequacy of certain industry practices and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules and regulations, including those relating to air contamination limits, the quantity of fresh air per occupant, and overall quality of air on board commercial aircraft. \$500,000 is authorized for completion of the study which is to be submitted to Congress not later than six months after enactment of the bill.

The FAA and industry representatives testified that existing aircraft air quality standards are adequate and that there is no evidence suggesting that they pose a safety or health threat to the traveling public. On the other hand, airline employee representatives and witnesses from the medical and scientific professions supported the bill, stressing the current lack of data on in-flight cabin air quality and possible threats to health and safety due to cigarette smoking and other dangers inherent in the cabins of modern jet aircraft.

The FAA testified that a 1971 study conducted jointly by the FAA and the Public Health Service revealed very low levels of air contaminants due to cigarette smoking which were judged not to represent a hazard to the nonsmoking passengers. Furthermore, the FAA representative stated that exposure to "passive" or "second hand" cigarette smoke "in a reasonably ventilated environment is not expected to have any relation to cardiovascular or pulmonary disease causation." The FAA noted that passengers' annoyance to smoke is currently being addressed by the Civil Aeronautics Board. A copy of the FAA testimony is attached.

The Air Transport Association of America stated that the current practice of separating nonsmokers from smokers "seems to work quite well." The ATA sees no need for additional study or further data collection.

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Representatives of the International Union of Flight Attendants, Association of Professional Flight Attendants, and the Association of Flight Attendants support the bill. Senator Inouye asked each group for their thoughts on smoking. The Association of Flight Attendants supports a ban on smoking on flights of one hour or less while the International Union of Flight Attendants supports a ban on flights of 2 hours or less. Mr. Donald Denmark, a United flight attendant, believes smoking should be totally banned. The flight attendant organizations asserted that the problem with a smoking ban on more lengthy flights is enforcement. They fear an increase in the number of assaults on attendants if they are required to enforce a ban on longer flights. Senator Inouye suggested the creation of two completely separate air circulation units or compartments, one for smokers and one for nonsmokers.

Doctor Michael B. Gregg of the Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Disease Control said the smoke to which a nonsmoker is exposed may cause significant annoyance or acute adverse health effects in asthmatics and in others with pre-existing illnesses. Gregg also mentioned that there is an increasing body of scientific evidence that suggests involuntary cigarette smoke inhalation may increase the risk of developing lung cancer. He maintains that there is no evidence to indicate that exposure to cigarette smoke aboard a commercial airliner differ from similar kinds of exposures in other relatively crowded situations. Other medical witnesses stated that smoking aboard aircraft is a serious health concern deserving serious study and attention.

A representative of the National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health who accompanied Dr. Gregg told the Subcommittee that NIOSH is currently working on a study on occupational hazards to airline attendants caused by cabin air contamination.

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