

**The original documents are located in Box 20, folder “La Guardia Airport Bombing” of the James M. Cannon Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

*La Guardia*

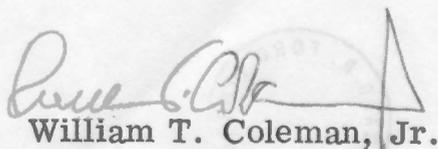
JAN 2 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable James M. Cannon  
Director, Domestic Council

SUBJECT: LaGuardia Bombing

Enclosed are the documents necessary for the formation of the Advisory Committee on Airport Security ("Committee") which is directed to consider the steps which should be taken to protect airports against bombings such as occurred at LaGuardia on December 29. Enclosure I is the proposed Executive Order which was discussed in the meeting on Tuesday, December 30. If the Executive Order is signed, it will facilitate closing some of the meetings of the Committee on the basis of a determination by me that the material being discussed is classified. It will also mean that formation of the Committee has been specifically authorized by the President in accordance with section 9(a)(1) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act ("Act") (5 U.S.C. App. I). This would permit the charter to become effective without publication of fifteen days notice in the Federal Register, as is otherwise required by section 9(a)(2) of the Act. Finally, in accordance with section 10(a)(2) of the Act, the Executive Order would permit meetings of the Committee to be held without public notice.

Although I recommend signing the Order, the Justice Department has expressed some reservation about the use of an Executive Order to clarify the definition of national security even if only for the purposes of this particular Committee. If a determination is made not to sign the Executive Order, it will be necessary to follow normal procedures for making the charter effective. Also enclosed, for your information, is a copy of the material which is being sent to Director Lynn to begin these alternative procedures.

  
William T. Coleman, Jr.





THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

JAN 2 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable James M. Cannon  
Director, Domestic Council

SUBJECT: LaGuardia Bombing

Enclosed are the documents necessary for the formation of the Advisory Committee on Airport Security ("Committee") which is directed to consider the steps which should be taken to protect airports against bombings such as occurred at LaGuardia on December 29. Enclosure I is the proposed Executive Order which was discussed in the meeting on Tuesday, December 30. If the Executive Order is signed, it will facilitate closing some of the meetings of the Committee on the basis of a determination by me that the material being discussed is classified. It will also mean that formation of the Committee has been specifically authorized by the President in accordance with section 9(a)(1) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act ("Act") (5 U. S. C. App. I). This would permit the charter to become effective without publication of fifteen days notice in the Federal Register, as is otherwise required by section 9(a)(2) of the Act. Finally, in accordance with section 10(a)(2) of the Act, the Executive Order would permit meetings of the Committee to be held without public notice.

Although I recommend signing the Order, the Justice Department has expressed some reservation about the use of an Executive Order to clarify the definition of national security even if only for the purposes of this particular Committee. If a determination is made not to sign the Executive Order, it will be necessary to follow normal procedures for making the charter effective. Also enclosed, for your information, is a copy of the material which is being sent to Director Lynn to begin these alternative procedures.

SIGNED BY  
WILLIAM T. COLEMAN, JR.

William T. Coleman, Jr.



## EXECUTIVE ORDER

### PROTECTION OF INFORMATION ABOUT ACTS OF TERRORISM, DESTRUCTION, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST AIR NAVIGATION FACILITIES

On December 29, 1975, a bomb exploded at La Guardia Airport in New York killing and injuring scores of people. Such an attack constitutes a threat to the national security. I have, therefore, ordered the Secretary of Transportation to form a task force to consider the steps which should be taken to protect airports, air navigation facilities and aircraft against acts of terrorism, destruction and violence. This task force, to be known as the Advisory Committee on Airport Security, will be composed of persons representing the Government and the air travel industry.

It will be necessary for this task force to discuss some matters the public disclosure of which might frustrate the objectives of the task force. For example, it will be necessary for the task force to discuss weaknesses in present airport protection systems. Further, the task force may propose certain solutions which will be ineffective if commonly known. Finally, there is the problem of what psychiatrists call the "contagion effect" which causes certain emotionally disturbed persons to try to duplicate violent events which are the topic of public discussion.

Therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, and as President of the United States, it is hereby ordered that certain of the information considered by the Advisory Committee on Airport Security concerning the protection of airports, air navigation facilities, and aircraft



against acts of terrorism, destruction, and violence requires protection against unauthorized disclosure in the interest of the national security as that term is used in Executive Order 11652. Keeping in mind that the interests of the United States and its citizens are best served by making information regarding the affairs of Government readily available to the public, the Secretary of Transportation or his delegee shall have the authority to determine which of the information considered by this Committee requires protection against unauthorized disclosure. The Secretary of Transportation shall also have the authority to determine that, for reasons of national security, notice of meetings of the Committee will not be published in the Federal Register.

This Order will expire six months from its effective date or whenever the work of the Committee is completed, whichever is sooner, unless formally extended.

The White House





THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

JAN 2 1976

Honorable James T. Lynn  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Mr. Lynn:

Attention: Committee Management Secretariat

Enclosed for your review is a draft of the proposed charter for establishment of the Advisory Committee on Airport Security.

This Committee was established at the direction of the President in response to the December 29 bombing at LaGuardia Airport. The Committee is to review and develop procedures to protect airports, air navigation facilities, and aircraft against acts of terrorism, destruction, and violence. These functions cannot be performed by any existing organizational element nor by any existing advisory committee. I have, therefore, determined that establishment of this Committee is in the public interest.

The charter provides for a membership fairly balanced in points of view represented, which will be composed of representatives of the Government and the air travel industry.

I have also enclosed, for your information, a copy of a proposed Executive Order and a memorandum transmitting that Order. As that memorandum points out, if the President signs the Order, the formation of the Committee will have been specifically authorized by the President in accordance with section 9(a)(1) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. I). This would permit the charter to become effective immediately.

If the President does not sign the Order, it will be necessary for you to complete normal consultation procedures. In view of the



emergency nature of the situation, I request that you begin those procedures pending the President's determination with regard to the Executive Order.

We will appreciate being advised when you have completed your consultation.

Sincerely,

**SIGNED BY**  
**WILLIAM T. COLEMAN, JR.**

William T. Coleman, Jr.

**Enclosures**

cc: Honorable James M. Cannon  
Director, Domestic Council



## CHARTER

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AIRPORT SECURITY

1. PURPOSE. This order constitutes the charter for creation of the subject Committee.
2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE. The threat of explosive or destructive devices placed in airports in the United States burdens interstate and foreign commerce and affects the national security of the United States. Countermeasures going beyond the security arrangements now in effect may be required. It is desirable to obtain information and suggestions from certain groups for the purpose of formulating appropriate Federal action. The purpose of the Committee is to facilitate the receipt of such information.
3. AUTHORITY AND DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES. The functions of the Committee shall be advisory only. The private sector members are encouraged to come forward with such information and advice as they deem pertinent to the purposes of the Committee, and they will be expected to reply to requests for information, comments and suggestions from participating Federal officials. The Chairman may ask the Committee to deliberate on certain problems and proposals and to come up with considered advice thereon, by majority and minority reports.
4. OFFICIAL TO WHOM COMMITTEE REPORTS. The Committee shall report to its Sponsor.
5. SPONSOR. The Secretary of Transportation is the sponsor of the Committee and shall:
  - a. Provide all needed staff support for the Committee;
  - b. Appoint a FAA employee as Executive Director;
  - c. Appoint members.



6. CHAIRMAN. The Chairman shall be the Federal Aviation Administrator, or his designee (who shall be an officer or employee of the Federal Government) who shall:
  - a. Conduct meetings;
  - b. Certify the accuracy of the minutes;
  - c. Plan agendas;
  - d. Monitor the progress of all regular and executive sessions of the Committee;
  - e. Assemble and maintain the Committee record, and respond to requests for public information relating to the Committee; and
  - f. Adjourn the meeting when he feels it is in the public interest to do so.
  
7. MEMBERSHIP. The Committee shall consist of representatives of the Department of Transportation, Office of the Secretary; the Federal Aviation Administration; the Department of Justice; the Department of the Treasury, and other Government agencies pursuant to the invitation of the Secretary of Transportation. In addition, the Committee shall consist of such persons with expertise from the transportation sector, as the Secretary shall appoint. These agencies shall designate their representatives on the Committee. All representatives must have appropriate security clearance.
  
8. REPORTS. All Committee reports and recommendations will be submitted to the Sponsor. Official releases concerning the activities of this Committee shall be made only by the Sponsor.



9. MEETINGS. The Committee will meet as required at the call of the Chairman.
10. COMPENSATION. No compensation is allowed to the members of the Committee for services, per diem or travel.
11. COSTS. There will be no operating costs per se for the Committee. Approximately two man-months will be required annually for necessary secretarial and administrative duties.
12. OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS.
  - a. Detailed instructions or governing rules for the operation of the Committee shall be developed from time-to-time as needed, reviewed and recommended by the Chairman, and approved by the Sponsor prior to implementation. They shall be made available to each member.
  - b. The Committee's structure and operation shall be reviewed annually by its Sponsor.
13. PUBLIC INTEREST. The formation and use of the Advisory Committee on Airport Security is determined to be in the public interest in connection with the performance of duties imposed on the Secretary of Transportation and the Department of Transportation, by section 4(a) of the Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. 1653 (a) and Title 6 of the Federal Aviation Act, 1958, as amended (49 U.S.C. 1421 et seq.) and other applicable authority.)
14. FILING DATE. December 31, 1975 is the effective date of the Charter, which will expire two years from that date unless sooner terminated or extended.
15. SPECIAL PROVISIONS. Pursuant to secs. 10(b) and (d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App. I., and 5 U.S.C. 552(b), Committee meetings may be closed to the public and materials referred to in sec. 10(b) of the Act may be withheld from public disclosure, if the



President or the Secretary of Transportation, as the case may be, has made the determinations required by law. However, the Committee welcomes, and will consider, all relevant information and suggestions received from the general public during its existence. Public participation in meetings open to the public is subject to reasonable rules of conduct and availability of space and time.



---

William T. Coleman, Jr.  
Secretary of Transportation

December 31, 1975



THE WHITE HOUSE

ACTION

WASHINGTON

January 16, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JIM CANNON 

SUBJECT:

Secretary Coleman's Report on  
LaGuardia Bombing

Attached for your review is a memorandum from Secretary Coleman summarizing the report of the Department of Transportation's task force study on the recent LaGuardia bombing (attached A).

Also attached is a copy of the task force report and a cover memorandum from John McLucas, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration. (attachment C)

The Domestic Council and OMB staff have reviewed this report and discussed the recommendations with representatives of DOT and FAA. The report contains a number of short term steps that the Secretary plans to implement immediately. It also contains recommendations for an analysis and evaluation of longer term steps to meet transportation security problems. In this process, the Secretary has assured us that maximum use will be made of experience gained by other agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that we respond to Secretary Coleman, thanking him for his efforts and urging him to continue his efforts to seek permanent solutions to transportation security problems. Attached is a letter from you to Secretary Coleman thanking him for his efforts and urging him to continue his work in this area (attachment B). The text of the letter has been approved by Paul Theis.

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve

\_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

January 12, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I am enclosing herewith as Attachment B the initial report of the Task Force on Airport Security formed as a consequence of the bombing at LaGuardia Airport in New York City.

This Task Force, under the chairmanship of the Federal Aviation Administrator, Dr. John L. McLucas, responded quickly. I believe the enclosed report is an excellent example of what government and industry cooperation can do when faced with a serious problem of national consequence.

As a result of their efforts, the FAA is able to take positive actions which are outlined in their letter of transmittal (Attachment A). I have studied this report and agree with its recommendations. Dr. McLucas will make these actions public later this week.

In summary the immediate action which will be taken includes:

- (1) Immediate on-site surveys of the nation's air carrier airports under the leadership of FAA Explosives Security Specialists to identify measures that airport operators can introduce quickly to prevent or deter the introduction of explosives or to reduce the effects of explosions, and to develop longer range airport counter-measures.
- (2) Continue the repositioning of airport public lockers in secure areas or to take other steps to control access, increase effective surveillance or reduce the effect of explosions.
- (3) Develop with the air carriers an effective and efficient system to reduce the possibility of explosives being placed aboard planes in checked baggage.
- (4) Develop procedures which will permit a better detection of explosives in bags.

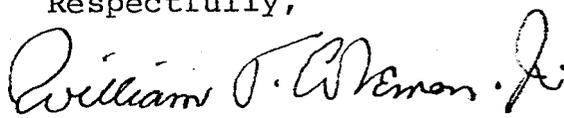


In addition to the actions to be taken immediately, I am considering certain legislative initiatives which would improve the security situation at our nation's airports. I will submit them to you as they are developed.

I am also concerned that this problem of airport security extends to the other transportation modes. To answer this concern, I have directed action within my own office to make recommendations to increase security at all transportation terminals.

I very much appreciate your active concern and leadership in this process. I assure you that this Department will pursue a vigorous program of close cooperation with other concerned Federal and local agencies to insure the maximum practicable protection of passengers of this nation's transportation system. I will continue to advise you of further developments.

Respectfully,

  
William T. Coleman, Jr.

Attachments



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Dear Secretary Coleman:

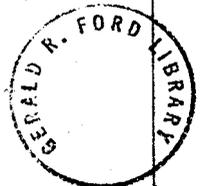
You and your staff, as well as others from within the Government and from the airline industry, are to be commended for your diligent work in responding to the recent LaGuardia Airport tragedy.

Your assessment of the issues we face in seeking permanent solutions to the problems of air transportation security correctly identifies the need to evaluate specific actions in terms of their legal, economic and operational impact. To this end, I am pleased to learn of your plans to continue the close cooperation with responsible local officials, other Federal agencies and industry representatives.

Safe and timely air transportation is an essential element of our Nation's economic vitality, national security and general well-being. We must, therefore, protect airline passengers and our airline system from outrageous acts of violence and destruction. The achievement of this goal will require the cooperation of officials at all levels of Government, of the transportation industry and of the general public. I urge all parties involved to cooperate in this effort and request your continued efforts to develop and implement comprehensive improvements in air transportation security.

Sincerely,

The Honorable William T. Coleman  
Secretary of Transportation  
Washington, D.C. 20590



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590



OFFICE OF  
THE ADMINISTRATOR

January 9, 1976

Honorable William T. Coleman, Jr.  
Secretary of Transportation  
Washington, D. C. 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In accordance with your instructions, I brought together experts from government and industry to review aviation security in light of the tragic explosion at LaGuardia Airport on December 29, 1975.

We do not now know whether the LaGuardia explosion was targeted against aviation or merely happened to occur in one of the lockers which are common to transportation terminals and other facilities serving the public. Whatever the connection, any strengthened security alternatives must be considered within the context of the U. S. air transportation system. There are 32 scheduled airlines operating a jet fleet of some 2,500 aircraft enplaning 500,000 passengers and more than 1,000,000 pieces of baggage on some 15,000 flights each day. The airlines serve almost 500 United States airports each of which is different in many respects. Accordingly, security alternatives must weigh carefully the impact on efficient movement of passengers, baggage and cargo, especially whether passengers can or should be expected to arrive at airports hours in advance of flight departures, and whether U. S. airports can or should be converted into fortress-like transportation facilities.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, the comprehensive working papers and studies should be carefully controlled. In the interests of aviation safety, I have accordingly determined that the detailed documentation not be circulated outside of authorized channels.

Based on the enclosed report, I am moving ahead on the following major initiatives:

Lockers: The LaGuardia explosion focused immediate attention on the security of public lockers. However, there are only 14,000 public-use lockers at airports and only 140 of the 500 air carrier airports in the country have any at all. And, the majority of these lockers are located at the 20 major airport terminals. So, securing



lockers is not the only answer. However, we are recommending that, where feasible, lockers be located within secure areas. Where this is not feasible, other means should be taken to control access, increase effective surveillance or reduce the effects of explosions.

FAA is conducting an immediate on-the-spot survey of the nation's airports to identify measures that can be introduced quickly and gather data to help develop long-range countermeasures.

Increased attention will be directed toward the redesign of lockers, locker areas and terminals. New designs might include modifications, for example, that would permit visual detection of stored baggage or restructuring the locker to direct the explosion blast away from persons nearby. Tests of current and modified lockers will provide guidelines on the best courses to pursue.

Checked Baggage and Cargo: Although the LaGuardia explosion occurred in a locker, it drew attention to other aspects of airport security, including current security requirements for checked baggage. Strengthened measures range from examining each piece of baggage to the development of less time-consuming but effective methods to determine quickly baggage and cargo that require special security attention. We also reviewed stricter application of or modifications to the procedures for handling baggage by authorized airline personnel, and more stringent measures for safeguarding luggage once it has been accepted. Some of these procedures will go into effect immediately; others are being refined and will be selected for implementation within 30 days.

Explosives Detection Techniques: FAA will immediately begin modifying existing x-ray absorption systems for operation at selected airports to detect explosives. The FAA also will step up efforts already underway to determine the feasibility of:

1. Using the x-ray fluorescence concept as an explosive detection technique.
2. Using nuclear magnetic resonance to detect different types of explosives.
3. Applying explosive vapor detection techniques to the inspection of hold baggage, cargo and the aircraft itself. Technology has not yet been able to come up with a mechanical "sniffer" that can compete with the nose of a trained dog, and therefore, we intend to increase their use.
4. Adapting a thermal neutron detection concept to examine checked baggage and cargo.



There are several criteria that must be used in the development of new equipment and procedures. They must be quick and effective. They must be reliable, easily maintained and operable by relatively unskilled personnel. They must not present any hazards to persons or the environment nor damage luggage or its contents. And airports, airlines and passengers must be able to afford them.

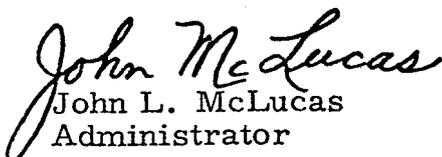
Based upon our final assessments, we may be asking for your assistance in obtaining additional funds required to carry out the expanded activities I have outlined if further funding appears necessary. We will, of course, explore the activities of other Federal agencies as they may relate to these initiatives to assure full utilization of appropriate Federal capabilities and to avoid any duplication of effort.

Ultimately, better methods and machines are not the entire answer, particularly if they induce a sense of complacency or relaxation of vigilance. When the FAA released its latest report on the number of hijackings and other criminal acts against aviation, some felt that the strict procedures introduced a few years back were no longer needed. But, the fact is that the threat is with us and our major concern is that people will not recognize this because of the program's success. So, too, with bombings. We must develop the best equipment and measures. But we all must realize that continued vigilance is equally vital.

After the LaGuardia bombing, I visited the LaGuardia, Dulles and National Airports to check their security devices and procedures, and I spoke to many airport and airline personnel. There is obviously a heightened level of awareness to the threat which is perhaps our most important immediate defense. All these people, from the sky-cap or the ticket agent who may first greet the travelers to the captain who flies them to their destination are the human factors on whom safety depends. Any technological help we give them to do their job is a plus, not the solution itself.

I am confident, in summary, that just as the anti-hijacking program has been extremely effective, we can be equally effective in preventing and deterring other criminal acts against aviation.

Sincerely,

  
John L. McLucas  
Administrator

Enclosure



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

ACTION

PRIORITY

January 16, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JIM CANNON

FROM:

STEVE McCONAHEY

SUBJECT:

Final Draft Letter from  
the President to Secretary  
Coleman on Airport Security

*Kathy Coleman  
for:*

Attached is a final draft on the letter from the President to Secretary Coleman regarding his report on airport security. This draft has been approved by Paul Theis.

May I please have your concurrence as the letter has been changed since showing it to you this morning.

Attachment



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 23, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JIM CANNON *(initials)*

SUBJECT:

Secretary Coleman's Report  
on LaGuardia Bombing

Attached for your review is a memorandum from Secretary Coleman summarizing the report of the Department of Transportation's task force study on the recent LaGuardia bombing (attachment A).

Also attached is a copy of the task force report and a cover memorandum from John McLucas, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration (attachment C).

The report contains a number of short term steps that the Secretary plans to implement immediately. It also contains recommendations for an analysis and evaluation of longer term steps to meet transportation security problems. In this process, the Secretary has assured us that maximum use will be made of experience gained by other agencies concerned with security problems.

Jack Marsh, Phil Buchen, Domestic Council and OMB have reviewed this report. In addition, a meeting was held with Secretary Coleman and Judge Tyler, Deputy Attorney General, to review the report and staff recommendations. It was agreed that after you have reviewed and approved this proposal the memoranda of Secretary Coleman and Administrator McLucas should be released, but that the detailed report should be held as confidential because of the sensitivity of the analyses and findings.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that we respond to Secretary Coleman, thanking him and urging him to continue his efforts to seek permanent solutions to transportation security problems. Attached for your signature is a letter from you to Secretary Coleman (attachment B). The text of the letter has been approved by Paul Theis.

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve

\_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove

DRAFT letter from the President to Secretary Coleman acknowledging receipt of the report on airport security.

Dear Secretary Coleman:

You and your staff, as well as others from within the Government and from the airline industry, are to be commended for your diligent work in responding to the recent LaGuardia Airport tragedy.

Your assessment of the issues we face in seeking permanent solutions to the problems of air transportation security correctly identifies the need to evaluate specific actions in terms of their legal, economic and operational impact. To this end, I am pleased to learn of your plans to continue the close cooperation with responsible local officials, other Federal agencies and industry representatives.

Safe and timely air transportation is an essential element of our Nation's economic vitality, national security and general well-being. We must, therefore, protect airline passengers and our airline system from outrageous acts of violence and destruction. The achievement of this goal will require the cooperation of officials at all levels of Government, of the transportation industry and of the general public. I urge all parties involved to cooperate in this effort and request your continued efforts to develop and implement comprehensive improvements in air transportation security.

Sincerely,



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

PRIORITY

January 16, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

PAUL THEIS

FROM:

STEVE McCONAHEY *SM*

SUBJECT:

Clearance on Draft  
Presidential Letter  
to Secretary Coleman

Would you please review the attached draft letter from the President to Secretary Coleman acknowledging receipt of the report on airport security.

Many thanks.

Attachment



DRAFT letter from the President to Secretary Coleman acknowledging receipt of the report on airport security.

*YRR*

Dear Secretary Coleman:

~~I would like to express my appreciation to~~ you and your staff, as well as others from within the Government and from the airline industry, are to be commended for your diligent work in responding to the recent LaGuardia Airport tragedy.

Your assessment of the issues ~~that~~ we face in seeking permanent solutions to the problems of air transportation security correctly identifies the need to evaluate specific actions in terms of their legal, economic and operational impact. To this end, I am pleased to learn of your plans to continue the close cooperation with responsible local officials, other Federal agencies and industry representatives.

Safe and timely air transportation is an essential element of our Nation's economic vitality, national security and general well-being. We must, therefore, protect airline passengers and our airline system from outrageous acts of violence and destruction. The achievement of this goal will require the cooperation of officials at all levels of Government, the transportation industry ~~officials~~ and of the general public. I urge all parties involved to cooperate in this effort and request your continued efforts to develop and implement comprehensive improvements in air transportation security.

Sincerley,



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

January 12, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I am enclosing herewith as Attachment B the initial report of the Task Force on Airport Security formed as a consequence of the bombing at LaGuardia Airport in New York City.

This Task Force, under the chairmanship of the Federal Aviation Administrator, Dr. John L. McLucas, responded quickly. I believe the enclosed report is an excellent example of what government and industry cooperation can do when faced with a serious problem of national consequence.

As a result of their efforts, the FAA is able to take positive actions which are outlined in their letter of transmittal (Attachment A). I have studied this report and agree with its recommendations. Dr. McLucas will make these actions public later this week.

In summary the immediate action which will be taken includes:

- (1) Immediate on-site surveys of the nation's air carrier airports under the leadership of FAA Explosives Security Specialists to identify measures that airport operators can introduce quickly to prevent or deter the introduction of explosives or to reduce the effects of explosions, and to develop longer range airport counter-measures.
- (2) Continue the repositioning of airport public lockers in secure areas or to take other steps to control access, increase effective surveillance or reduce the effect of explosions.
- (3) Develop with the air carriers an effective and efficient system to reduce the possibility of explosives being placed aboard planes in checked baggage.
- (4) Develop procedures which will permit a better detection of explosives in bags.

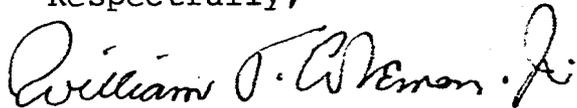


In addition to the actions to be taken immediately, I am considering certain legislative initiatives which would improve the security situation at our nation's airports. I will submit them to you as they are developed.

I am also concerned that this problem of airport security extends to the other transportation modes. To answer this concern, I have directed action within my own office to make recommendations to increase security at all transportation terminals.

I very much appreciate your active concern and leadership in this process. I assure you that this Department will pursue a vigorous program of close cooperation with other concerned Federal and local agencies to insure the maximum practicable protection of passengers of this nation's transportation system. I will continue to advise you of further developments.

Respectfully,



William T. Coleman, Jr.

Attachments



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. Secretary:

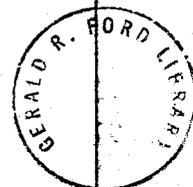
You and your staff, as well as others from within the Government and from the airline industry, are to be commended for your diligent work in responding to the recent LaGuardia Airport tragedy.

Your assessment of the issues we face in seeking permanent solutions to the problems of air transportation security correctly identifies the need to evaluate specific actions in terms of their legal, economic and operational impact. To this end, I am pleased to learn of your plans to continue the close cooperation with responsible local officials, other Federal agencies and industry representatives. A particular effort should be made to coordinate your future activities with other agencies concerned with the broader question of security against these types of incidents.

Safe and timely air transportation is an essential element of our Nation's economic vitality, national security and general well-being. We must, therefore, protect airline passengers and our airline system from such acts of violence and destruction. The achievement of this goal will require the cooperation of officials at all levels of Government, of the transportation industry and of the general public. I urge all parties involved to cooperate in this effort and request your continued efforts to develop and implement comprehensive improvements in air transportation security.

Sincerely,

The Honorable William T. Coleman  
Secretary of Transportation  
400 7th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590



OFFICE OF  
THE ADMINISTRATOR

January 9, 1976

Honorable William T. Coleman, Jr.  
Secretary of Transportation  
Washington, D. C. 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In accordance with your instructions, I brought together experts from government and industry to review aviation security in light of the tragic explosion at LaGuardia Airport on December 29, 1975.

We do not now know whether the LaGuardia explosion was targeted against aviation or merely happened to occur in one of the lockers which are common to transportation terminals and other facilities serving the public. Whatever the connection, any strengthened security alternatives must be considered within the context of the U.S. air transportation system. There are 32 scheduled airlines operating a jet fleet of some 2,500 aircraft enplaning 500,000 passengers and more than 1,000,000 pieces of baggage on some 15,000 flights each day. The airlines serve almost 500 United States airports each of which is different in many respects. Accordingly, security alternatives must weigh carefully the impact on efficient movement of passengers, baggage and cargo, especially whether passengers can or should be expected to arrive at airports hours in advance of flight departures, and whether U.S. airports can or should be converted into fortress-like transportation facilities.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, the comprehensive working papers and studies should be carefully controlled. In the interests of aviation safety, I have accordingly determined that the detailed documentation not be circulated outside of authorized channels.

Based on the enclosed report, I am moving ahead on the following major initiatives:

Lockers: The LaGuardia explosion focused immediate attention on the security of public lockers. However, there are only 14,000 public-use lockers at airports and only 140 of the 500 air carrier airports in the country have any at all. And, the majority of these lockers are located at the 20 major airport terminals. So, securing



lockers is not the only answer. However, we are recommending that, where feasible, lockers be located within secure areas. Where this is not feasible, other means should be taken to control access, increase effective surveillance or reduce the effects of explosions.

FAA is conducting an immediate on-the-spot survey of the nation's airports to identify measures that can be introduced quickly and gather data to help develop long-range countermeasures.

Increased attention will be directed toward the redesign of lockers, locker areas and terminals. New designs might include modifications, for example, that would permit visual detection of stored baggage or restructuring the locker to direct the explosion blast away from persons nearby. Tests of current and modified lockers will provide guidelines on the best courses to pursue.

Checked Baggage and Cargo: Although the LaGuardia explosion occurred in a locker, it drew attention to other aspects of airport security, including current security requirements for checked baggage. Strengthened measures range from examining each piece of baggage to the development of less time-consuming but effective methods to determine quickly baggage and cargo that require special security attention. We also reviewed stricter application of or modifications to the procedures for handling baggage by authorized airline personnel, and more stringent measures for safeguarding luggage once it has been accepted. Some of these procedures will go into effect immediately; others are being refined and will be selected for implementation within 30 days.

Explosives Detection Techniques: FAA will immediately begin modifying existing x-ray absorption systems for operation at selected airports to detect explosives. The FAA also will step up efforts already underway to determine the feasibility of:

1. Using the x-ray fluorescence concept as an explosive detection technique.
2. Using nuclear magnetic resonance to detect different types of explosives.
3. Applying explosive vapor detection techniques to the inspection of hold baggage, cargo and the aircraft itself. Technology has not yet been able to come up with a mechanical "sniffer" that can compete with the nose of a trained dog, and therefore, we intend to increase the use of explosive detection dogs.
4. Adapting a thermal neutron detection concept to examine checked baggage and cargo.



There are several criteria that must be used in the development of new equipment and procedures. They must be quick and effective. They must be reliable, easily maintained and operable by relatively unskilled personnel. They must not present any hazards to persons or the environment nor damage luggage or its contents. And airports, airlines and passengers must be able to afford them.

Based upon our final assessments, we may be asking for your assistance in obtaining additional funds required to carry out the expanded activities I have outlined if further funding appears necessary. We will, of course, explore the activities of other Federal agencies as they may relate to these initiatives to assure full utilization of appropriate Federal capabilities and to avoid any duplication of effort.

Ultimately, better methods and machines are not the entire answer, particularly if they induce a sense of complacency or relaxation of vigilance. When the FAA released its latest report on the number of hijackings and other criminal acts against aviation, some felt that the strict procedures introduced a few years back were no longer needed. But, the fact is that the threat is with us and our major concern is that people will not recognize this because of the program's success. So, too, with bombings. We must develop the best equipment and measures. But we all must realize that continued vigilance is equally vital.

After the LaGuardia bombing, I visited the LaGuardia, Dulles and National Airports to check their security devices and procedures, and I spoke to many airport and airline personnel. There is obviously a heightened level of awareness to the threat which is perhaps our most important immediate defense. All these people, from the sky-cap or the ticket agent who may first greet the travelers to the captain who flies them to their destination are the human factors on whom safety depends. Any technological help we give them to do their job is a plus, not the solution itself.

I am confident, in summary, that just as the anti-hijacking program has been extremely effective, we can be equally effective in preventing and deterring other criminal acts against aviation.

Sincerely,

  
John L. McLucas  
Administrator



Enclosure