

Grand Canyon Crash Brought Many Air Traffic Control Improvements

Editor's note: It was on a Saturday six years ago last week, that two airliners collided over the Grand Canyon and sent 128 persons to their deaths. The following dispatch sums up the accomplishments and the failures in solving the air collision problem since that disaster.

By ROBERT J. SERLING
UPI Aviation Editor

Washington - (UPI) - What happened on June 30, 1956, at 21,000 feet over the Grand Canyon, led to major reforms and improvements in the nation's air traffic control system.

Unfortunately, however, the traffic has grown faster than all the necessary reforms and improvements could be applied.

In the six years since a United DC7 and a TWA Constellation collided over Arizona, the achievements are many and impressive. They include:

—Establishment of the independent, well-heeled Federal Aviation Agency in place of the old financially starved, politically harassed Civil Aeronautics Administration which was part of the Commerce Department.

—Tremendous expansion of the Federal government's Air Traffic Control System particularly in use of long-range, en route radar to separate traffic safely and in the actual number of controllers from 8,036 in 1956 to 17,625 as of today.

—Better coordination between military and civil traffic, especially at the higher, en route altitudes used by jets.

—Improved cockpit visibility in every plane, particularly airliners built since the 1956 crash.

—Enormous increases in the use of instrument flight rules which put planes under control from the ground (about 90 per cent of commercial airline flights now are under IFR compared to about 30 per cent at the time of the crash over Grand Canyon).

—Research Thwarts System. ATC research itself has generated not only delays in long-range modernization but in badly needed immediate

improvements. In devoting the majority of funds to a system of the future, some of the needs of the present have been ignored. The chief sufferer is the controller, who commits errors that are as much the fault of inadequate tools as a human mistake. And most of them are committed in the crowded, busy terminal areas where en route traffic begins to pile up.

There has been widespread publicity recently about controller errors, such as the one that put two airliners into a holding pattern at the same altitude for more than 40 minutes. And the FAA, for the first time, is taking a really close look at controller problems. It has one group of trouble-shooters, headed by former airline executive Gordon Bain, looking at the present system itself to see what immediate improvements can be made. It has another group, directed by veteran ATC expert Charles Carmody, gathering suggestions from controllers themselves.

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The FAA since it came into existence in 1958 has spent \$51.5 million in research to perfect an automatic or semi-automatic system of controlling air traffic. FAA Administrator Najeeb E. Halaby recently warned that such a system still is about five years away—and probably will

require spending another \$50 million before a completely modern system is actually working.

The chief blame, according to impartial experts, is the lack of any orderly plan for automated ATC. "Wandering research" one critic called it—the failure to settle on a single system and then hammer away until it is perfected.

Part of this is due to the very human tendency to delay equipment decisions because "there might be a better device just around the corner." Only in the past few months has FAA's massive research program stopped wandering and started concentrating.

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Price of Coffee in America Critical To Latin Americans

By A. ROBERT SMITH
Mail Tribune Washington Correspondent

Washington (Special)—The price of a cup of American coffee is more critical to a number of Latin American countries than whether they receive American aid under the new Alliance for Progress program.

Mr. Wayne Thomas, chairman of the Latin American subcommittee on Foreign Relations, made the clear in a recent speech in which he summarized some of the obstacles to economic progress south of the border.

Generally, Morse thinks the Alliance for Progress has registered some gains but that it has a long way to go in realizing new levels of economic cooperation and productivity for the continent south of the border.

He said the failure thus far to work out price stabilization agreements for such critical Latin exports as coffee has caused distress in some countries. The price of Colombian coffee, for example, has dropped from 66 to 41 cents a pound in the past five years—and every cent per pound means a loss of \$7.5 million to Colombia, for coffee provides about 77 per cent of that country's export income.

Other Latin countries are dependent upon other single commodities for a heavy share of their income—Venezuela, 92 per cent from oil; Bolivia, 82 per cent from tin; Ecuador, 57 per cent from bananas; and Chile, 66 per cent from copper.

Penny Per Cup. If the price of coffee could be restored to 60 cents, Morse said the cost to American coffee drinkers would amount to about a penny per cup. But it would mean an additional \$400 million a year in earnings for Brazil and \$50 million annually for Colombia.

The success of the program, said Morse, is dependent upon the willingness of recipient

nations to undertake fundamental reforms of their institutions and social patterns and to mobilize to the fullest extent possible their own domestic resources.

"Many of those who control the major resources of some Latin countries fall into a state of shock whenever these reforms are mentioned," which they falsely confuse with violent upheaval. The usual result of such "shock waves" is that another \$100 million or so wings off to Switzerland. It occurs that a privileged minority who fear revolution above all things so act, in their fear, as to make revolution more likely," said Morse.

He said estimates of the flight of capital abroad range from \$5 to \$10 billion, which is one-third to one-half the total \$30 billion contemplated in aid under the Alliance for Progress.

At the same time, United States and European investment in Latin America has dropped sharply below expectations. In contrast to \$300 million a year in the fifties, U.S. investment was down to \$90 million in 1960 and \$190 million in 1961.

"It is up to the Latin American governments to make their countries more attractive to private capital and it cannot be said that the efforts thus far made are encouraging for the future," the senator said. "Recent expropriations and nationalistic financial regulations adopted in a number of countries have tended to frighten off new investors."

On the positive side, Morse said in the first year of the Alliance, as the U.S. committed \$1 billion in aid, "measures of progress and reform have been begun throughout the continent, ranging from the mobilization of domestic resources to new education and housing programs (