

Last year, FAA air route traffic control centers handled over 14 million flights; Chicago, Kennedy, Miami, and Los Angeles Airports each handled over 400,000 annual flight movements. The safety and efficiency of air commerce dictate the need for a reliable air traffic control system that will provide continuous operational capability. A breakdown in the air traffic control system at any one of the major high-density terminals or air route traffic control centers disrupts scheduled airline service throughout the country.

The airlines, therefore, urge the FAA take steps to assure continuity of service, despite equipment failure or malfunction, at high traffic density terminals and all en route centers. FAA is now procuring equipment for 50 selected airports to provide standby electrical power supplies which will be independent of commercial power. A similar capability to survive radar and communications equipment failures should also be provided at key control facilities.

The airlines recommend that: FAA initiate a program to assure that continuity of service despite failures of power, navigation, radar, and communications equipment be completed by 1972.

NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

One important aspect of the national airspace system which cannot be overlooked is the need for additional personnel to install, maintain, and operate the various facilities necessary to handle the present and future volume of air traffic properly. Virtually every major FAA air traffic control facility is short of personnel. Shortages exist among controllers, maintenance technicians, and installation engineers. The shortages apparently stem from budgetary limitations of recent years. As a consequence, the efficiency of the system has suffered. Burdened controllers are unable to provide additional ATC services which could enhance safety and cope with the growing traffic volume.

Also affecting FAA's hiring practices is the hope that future automation might reduce the requirement for added controller personnel. While we share this hope, we consider it ill-advised to delay present hiring in the expectation that future automation, which is still some 3 to 5 years away, will eventually reduce the requirement for additional controllers. The demands of traffic growth alone may absorb any potential reduction in future personnel requirements that might accrue from automation.

Not only should FAA be granted a restoration of fiscal year 1968 funds requested for personnel, but additional funds should be provided to permit the hiring of still further personnel necessary to provide the added safety services we recommend.

The airlines recommend that—

(a) FAA be authorized to acquire operations personnel commensurate with the safety services required for the growing traffic volume.

(b) Budgetary limitations not be imposed upon personnel providing safety services.

Present Pace Won't Do. We have suggested in the past few minutes very extensive and expensive improvements in the ATC system. Nothing that we have suggested is beyond the state of the art. However, if our present pace in carrying out these plans is