

STATEMENT OF M. CRAIG BEARD, DIRECTOR OF AIRWORTHINESS, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT, CONCERNING THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE DRAFT REPORT ON SMALL AIR CARRIER AIRCRAFT. SEPTEMBER 27, 1983.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Craig Beard, Director of Airworthiness for the FAA. With me today from the FAA are Kenneth Hunt, Director of Flight Operations, and William Fromme, Director of Aviation Safety. We are pleased to appear before you today to provide you with our views concerning the General Accounting Office's draft of a proposed report concerning the accident rate of small air carrier aircraft.

The GAO draft report was made available to the FAA last Wednesday, less than one week ago, so we have not had an opportunity to adequately review the bases for its conclusions and recommendations. We have not had time yet to try to validate the statistical data contained in the report, and we believe it is important to do that since much of the data seems to be predicated on estimates and assumptions. For example, the report estimates that commuter carriers take off and land on an hourly basis about twice as much as the large air carriers do. That assumption seems to be applied to the air taxis in the report, yet our instinctive reaction is

that the air taxis probably conduct twice as many take offs and landings per hour as the commuters do. That could mean that the exposure of the air taxis to the most critical regimes of flight from an accident perspective may be twice that of the commuters and four times that of the large air carriers--a significant factor to be considered when assessing accident data.

Both the Administrator and the Associate Administrator for Aviation Standards have reviewed the draft report and have concluded that, on the whole, it appears to make some significant points which require and will receive serious consideration on our part. The analysis of accidents has been compiled in a way that presents a different approach than that typically taken, which may be helpful to us. As we have said many times before, we welcome input from any source that may help us do our job better. At first review, the GAO's recommendations appear to have merit. Therefore, our plan is to seek to validate more fully the kinds of data and information contained in the report, and reach conclusions of our own. Once we have done that, we will be able to determine the best course of action to be pursued by the FAA and will be in a position to respond more directly to the report's conclusions and recommendations.

I would like to mention some of the activities we have recently been involved in that will contribute to the safety of the kinds of small aircraft reviewed in the GAO draft report. One such effort emanated from an industry panel chaired by Jack Olcott, Editor of Business and Commercial Aviation. This General Aviation Safety Panel, comprised of ten representatives of the aviation community, formulated recommendations regarding regulatory and other actions which the FAA could take to improve small aircraft flying safety.

The Panel made 16 recommendations in the form of a final report to the FAA Administrator in February. The recommendations cover weather, training, crashworthiness, and dissemination of safety data. The FAA agreed to support and take action on 15 of the 16 recommendations. For several of the recommendations, action had already been taken by the FAA prior to our response to the final report on July 5, 1983. For others, longer-range projects were committed.

As a follow-on to the Olcott effort, on July 6 and 7, 1983, a group of manufacturing, regulatory, research, and user constituencies met to discuss general aviation crashworthiness. A meeting is also taking place today on crashworthiness of newly certificated general aviation Part 23 aircraft with fewer than 10 passenger seats. The

objective of these meetings is to prepare, by February 15, 1984, a draft proposal on crashworthiness certification criteria to be submitted to the FAA by May 1984.

We also have requested input from the public concerning changes which the FAA should make to improve Part 23 certification standards. That request was published in the Federal Register last January, and we are still awaiting comments from the public before deciding what actions to take.

I would also mention that there are elements of the NAS Plan which will prove to be of direct benefit to the air taxis which operate small aircraft. As you know, real time weather information both at the point of departure and at the destination would be of substantial benefit to on demand operators using many of the smaller airports. The Automated Weather Observation System, which is currently being tested at 14 demonstration sites, is expected to prove out as a cost-effective way of providing 24 hour weather observations. The AWOS sensors provide wind, temperature, dew point, altimeter, visibility, and cloud height which is communicated through synthesized voice and digital outputs.

Finally, the FAA has just completed a review of the aircraft engine certification and installation requirements. This

involved the issuance of an NPRM and analysis of public comment. We are now considering a final rule which would add additional engine installation requirements including a variety of safety related areas that would apply to small airplanes with nine or less seats.

The Small Airplane Directorate has also completed a review of the policies and guidance material related to providing acceptable means of showing compliance with the structural requirements that are applicable to airplanes of 9 or less seats. Many of the twenty eight items identified in this review were in safety-related areas. These items were all discussed with interested industry representatives at a public meeting held in Wichita, Kansas, on June 8 and 9, 1983, and many items were agreed to by those representatives. Five advisory circulars have been developed and are now in coordination required for their issuance.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to reiterate that we are taking a close and positive look at the GAO draft report and will respond promptly to the recommendations once our review is completed.

That completes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. My associates and I would be pleased to respond to questions you may have at this time.