

STATEMENT OF JAMES A. WILDING, DIRECTOR, METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIRPORTS, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, CONCERNING THE FAA'S TEST OF THE JET AIRCRAFT DEPARTURE SCATTER PLAN AT NATIONAL AIRPORT. APRIL 12, 1984.

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

As Director of the FAA's Metropolitan Washington Airports, I oversee the operation of both Washington National and Dulles International Airports. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the "scatter" plan which the FAA tested at National Airport.

The scatter plan was a test to determine the effect of distributing aircraft noise from jets departing National over a wider area, thus affecting more people but presumably less intensely than existing flight paths. During the test, departing aircraft were allowed to turn away from the Potomac River towards their destinations sooner than under the normally used departure procedures at National. Specifically, during the test, aircraft on northbound take-offs could be turned as early as 2 miles from the airport, instead of the usual turning point of 10 miles. For southbound departures the turning point was reduced from 5 to 4 miles under the plan.

As the Subcommittee is well aware, aircraft noise has been a persistent problem for some residents under the flight paths

for National Airport. The FAA/DOT has worked with this problem over many years in order to reduce the impact of noise on citizens who live around the airport or under its flight paths. In doing so, we have relied heavily for a number of years on the Council of Governments for its comments and recommendations relating to aircraft noise issues at National. For example, in the summer of 1979, at COG's request, the FAA conducted a test of extending the south departure flight path from 5 to 10 miles.

In the spring of 1981, COG requested that the FAA test a scatter plan which had been developed by the Metropolitan Area Coalition on Airport Problems (a local citizens' organization) and the Prince George's County Advisory Board on National Airport problems. We had to put this issue aside because of the air traffic controllers' strike in August 1981, but told COG that we would advise them when we would be able to consider such a test.

In the Spring of 1983, we advised COG that air traffic control concerns no longer prevented us from considering a test of the scatter plan, but that an environmental assessment had to be completed. We prepared a detailed environmental assessment of the proposal, published it, and received a great deal of public comment, both for and against the test. This assessment was made available to COG.

In July 1983, the COG Board of Directors reaffirmed its request that the FAA conduct the scatter plan test. The FAA agreed to do so for up to 90 days, so that the scatter plan idea could be properly evaluated by the community, COG, and the FAA. We began the test on October 24, 1983, and completed it on January 7, 1984. The test generated extensive public response; while it was being conducted, we received over 18,000 telephone calls and nearly a thousand letters.

We and COG are now compiling the data collected during the scatter plan test. These data include noise monitoring, flight path, and public reaction data collected by the FAA, along with public opinion information collected by COG surveys. This summer, we and COG expect to issue a joint report containing all of this information. Once that report has been issued, should COG propose permanent adoption of the scatter plan procedure, we would consider that recommendation in the context of the materials developed during our test program. Today, jets departing National are directed to use the same flight patterns and noise abatement procedures that were in use before the test.

That completes my prepared statement, Madam Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have at this time.