STATEMENT OF PAUL BOHR, DIRECTOR, GREAT LAKES REGION, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, CONCERNING AIR TRAFFIC OPERATIONS AT O'HARE AIRPORT. NOVEMBER 13, 1986. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Paul Bohr, Director of the FAA's Great Lakes Region. I am responsible for FAA activities in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota. I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to briefly describe operations at O'Hare Airport here in Chicago and to respond to questions you may have. With me is Ted Burcham, Manager of our Air Traffic Division.

At the outset, before discussing the current staffing situation at O'Hare, I would like to publicly note the fine job done by our air traffic controllers at O'Hare. These men and women work in one of the most active air traffic environments in the world, and they consistently perform their jobs with the highest level of professionalism. I'd like to take a moment to describe that air traffic environment for you. Average daily operations at O'Hare consisted of 2076 operations in July 1981. In July 1986, that number had increased to 2212 operations a day. We expect a slight increase in the future, and project average daily operations to be about the 2290 level in July 1987.

We actually have two air traffic control facilities housed at O'Hare: the Tower Cab and the O'Hare Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON). Whereas in the past, our controllers were generally trained to work in both areas of the facility, they are now assigned to either the Tower Cab or the TRACON.

Our authorized staffing in the Tower consists of 28 full performance level (FPL) air traffic controllers; 4 controllers in the training pipeline; and 7 air traffic assistants. Air traffic assistants perform some duties of lesser complexity that before 1982 were performed by higher graded controller personnel. As of November 1, 1986, our on-board staffing in the facility consisted of 28 FPL controllers; 9 controllers who have not attained FPL status, but who are certified to control traffic at some positions; 5 controllers in the training pipeline; and 12 air traffic assistants.

Authorized staffing in the TRACON consists of 58 FPL controllers; 7 controllers in the training pipeline; and 7 air traffic assistants. Our on-board staffing in the TRACON as of November 1, 1986, was 38 FPL controllers; 9 controllers who have not yet attained FPL status; 2 controllers in the training pipeline; and 5 air traffic assistants.

At this time, I would like to emphasize one key point. Much focus has been placed on the numbers of FPL controllers at FAA

facilities. While attaining FPL status denotes that an individual is certified to perform all required positions in a facility, we have always had controllers who have not attained FPL status, but who are highly qualified to perform the work of all of the positions on which they have been certified. Much productive air traffic control work is performed by these controllers, who, in a very real sense, are the equivalent of an FPL on each position for which they have been certified. Therefore, the number of FPLs in a facility is not a true yardstick of the number of controllers in a facility who are qualified to independently control traffic. This is true, not only at O'Hare, but at nearly all air traffic control facilities in the United States. I should also point out to the Subcommittee that our staffing situation at any facility is a highly dynamic one--numbers of FPL controllers or controllers in training change on a continual basis as we experience retirements, recruit new people, or certify controllers on new positions of operation. In fact, if changes are made in airspace assignments at a facility, some controllers assigned to new positions of operation may no longer be classified as FPL controllers until they have checked out on the new positions, even though they may have served as FPL controllers at that same facility for many years.

Virtually all of the controllers we bring into O'Hare are highly qualified controllers and many have years of FPL service at other

FAA facilities before being selected to work at O'Hare. An individual is initially assigned to O'Hare as less than an FPL controller since, to be an FPL controller, the individual must be certified on all required positions within the new facility. This is not to say that we are not working toward increasing our numbers of FPL controllers; we certainly are. Increasing the number of FPLs at a facility provides flexibility in scheduling of controllers and can reduce overtime requirements as well.

In addition to the controllers currently assigned to O'Hare, we have selected an additional 6 controllers for assignment to the TRACON and 5 for the Tower, but they have not yet reported for duty. We are continuing efforts to identify good candidates for assignment to O'Hare, and have made solid progress in our rebuilding efforts at the facility. In fact, our goal is to certify an additional 12 FPL controllers in the TRACON and 7 in the Tower during this fiscal year.

In addition to our efforts to improve our staffing posture at O'Hare, we are continuing to upgrade the automated equipment in use at O'Hare. We currently have available to our controllers at O'Hare the Automated Radar Terminal System III (ARTS III) which provides continuous information on aircraft identity, altitude and speed, permitting our controllers to concentrate on aircraft control and separation. We also have two Flight Data Entry

Printout Systems (FDEP) which provide flight strip printouts on aircraft arrivals and departures for the TRACON and Tower controllers. Moreover, since 1984, we have had a Low Level Wind Shear Alert System (LLWAS) at O'Hare to provide pilots with information on hazardous wind conditions on or near the airport.

As I indicated a moment ago, we are continuing to upgrade the equipment available at O'Hare. For example, in February 1988, we expect to receive delivery of an ASR-9 airport surveillance radar which will have improved aircraft detection capability for aircraft targets located over ground clutter. Further, it will provide 6-level weather capability. In 1990, we plan to replace the existing airport surface detection equipment (ASDE-2) with a new model (ASDE-3) which will have greater weather penetration capability that will enhance runway and vehicle presentation to the controllers. We also expect to have operational at O'Hare in 1989 an enhanced LLWAS with increased capability for detection of microburst and windshear occurrence on the main runways for aircraft approaching or departing the airport.

A doppler weather radar system is also scheduled to be installed at O'Hare in 1990. This system will provide severe weather information for local air traffic controllers by providing warning of localized wind shear, gust fronts, down bursts, and weather turbulence which could be hazardous to approaching or departing aircraft.

In short, we have a variety of equipment changes scheduled for O'Hare in the near-term, which will further improve our operational capabilities there.

In closing, Madam Chairman, I would like to reiterate my view that we have made solid progress at O'Hare in our rebuilding efforts. Our staffing situation continues to improve and we are continuing to upgrade the equipment which is so vital to controllers and pilots. We continue to handle high volumes of traffic on a daily basis both safely and efficiently, and I have great confidence in our ability to meet the challenges of the future as well.

That completes my prepared statement, Madam Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to questions that you or Members of the Subcommittee may have at this time.