

STATEMENT OF CHARLES E. WEITHONER, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT, CONCERNING THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL WORK FORCE. AUGUST 14, 1986.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to discuss our air traffic controller work force. Accompanying me is Norbert A. Owens, Deputy Associate Administrator for Air Traffic.

As I understand it, the Subcommittee's interest this morning is primarily in the system for counting and reporting on air traffic controllers. We have informally met with staff from the General Accounting Office (GAO), and they have outlined a proposal that we report on staffing of our control work force to include the following component elements:

CONTROL WORK FORCE

1. Full-Performance Level Controllers: Air traffic controllers who are engaged in the actual separation of aircraft as their primary duty. Typically these controllers are the highest grade level authorized for nonsupervisory controllers at the particular facility and they are certified to handle all required positions of operation within their assigned area.

2. Developmentals: Air traffic controllers who have successfully completed initial training at FAA's Academy and are in training in facilities to become full-performance level controllers. Many are completely qualified to control traffic at one or more control positions.
  
3. Traffic Management Coordinators: Air traffic controllers who are responsible for managing the flow of aircraft to, from, and within the facility, and coordinating traffic flow between facilities for which he/she has delegated responsibilities. The traffic management coordinators must maintain currency on positions of operation on which they are certified. These controllers contribute directly to management of the flow of traffic.
  
4. Area Supervisors: Air traffic controllers who are the first-line supervisors in operational facilities. They are responsible for the safe and efficient operation of the area they supervise and maintain operational currency within their area. They work a minimum of 10 percent of their time performing the duties of a controller. Area supervisors in most facilities average over 20 percent of their time working traffic.

5. Air Traffic Managers at Level I Facilities: Air traffic managers at Level I terminal facilities (the smallest towers) perform the duties of area supervisors as well as being the facility manager. They usually spend a minimum of 10 percent of their time working traffic and are required to maintain currency.

We note that the definitions outlined above include supervisors who work traffic only a portion of their time on the job. On the other hand, the definitions exclude trainees in their first few months with the agency, as well as air traffic assistants (ATA's) who do not directly control traffic, but who do work in direct support of controllers--work that would otherwise be done by controllers if we did not utilize air traffic assistants. Under the GAO proposal, we will also not be counting in the control work force certain staff personnel who maintain currency on one or more positions, or reemployed annuitants, or part-time controllers--all of whom are capable of, and in fact, do control traffic, although not on a full-time basis. We have no objection to reporting to this committee in accordance with GAO recommendations.

We do feel that the way we have been reporting on controller staffing is also an accurate and generally satisfactory way of reporting. In our appropriation bills and in committee reports, we have been given targets for control work force staffing that are based on the current definitions and current reporting

practices. We will continue to prepare reports in the way we have in the past for the Appropriations Committees of both the House and Senate and for aviation organizations and the media. These committees and other organizations are accustomed to our reporting system and we believe that if we changed now we would create a great deal of confusion.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared statement. Mr. Owens and I will be pleased to answer any questions which you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.