STATEMENT OF RAYMOND A. SALAZAR, DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION SECURITY, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, CONCERNING WEAPONS DETECTABILITY. DECEMBER 10, 1987.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to provide the views of the Federal Aviation Administration concerning weapons detectability.

We appreciate the interest of the Subcommittee in looking at ways in which to foster improvements in the air transportation security system. The bills pending before this Subcommittee (H.R. 84, 155, 1002, 1785, and 2845) represent an effort to respond to the potential threat of firearms being developed which are not reasonably susceptible to detection by existing technology in use at our Nation's airports. We share your concern that a successful effort to produce a firearm which is undetectable by current methods would introduce uncertainty and an additional element of risk into our air transportation system.

In our view, any approach concerning firearms detectability should place primary authority in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, as is currently the case; moreover, the exercise of authority in this area should rely on the expertise of the FAA Administrator with respect to the capability and necessary effectiveness level of airport screening systems. We further

believe that, insofar as practicable, the standards used in determining detectability should be objective in nature.

As we have indicated before, however, it is important to recognize that we are aware of no current "non-metal" firearm which is not reasonably detectable by present technology and methods in use at our airports today. Certainly that does not mean we can be complacent. We are actively pursuing technology within the FAA that is intended to improve the state-of-the-art in the detection of weapons. Our primary focus in the past has been on explosives detection, but we are now engaged in a program to improve firearms detection as well. This research must continue since, even if laws were on the books prohibiting "non-detectable" firearms in the United States, the possibility would still remain that a terrorist or criminal could obtain access to such technology once it exists elsewhere in the world. Consequently, improved methods of screening as well as improved technology must continue to be the first line of defense to combatting the threat of hijackings or terrorist activity in our air transportation system as a result of future technological advancements in weaponry.

There is, however, no simple solution to what is a complex problem that continues to evolve as terrorists track the advancement of technology and employ more sophisticated methods. It is important that our research and development activities be pursued with a

full appreciation of the possibility that firearms technology could at some point threaten to outstrip today's detection capabilities.

I would note that, in conducting such research, we have maintained a continuing liaison with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, since they are the agency charged with proposing and implementing firearms policy.

At this time, the research we have initiated involves the feasibility of new detection concepts and technology to detect non-metallic weapons and explosive devices in carryon luggage and on passengers. We have also undertaken a program to upgrade the performance of current concourse detection systems. Several approaches, including x-ray, infrared, and acoustics, show some promise of being able to respond to the threat of non-metallic weapons. Other approaches, particularly chemiluminescence and ion mobility, are anticipated to prove effective in detecting plastic explosives and perhaps gunpowder. Moreover, we have taken a variety of steps to tighten up and improve screening using existing technology.

In short, we are closely looking at this issue, and are hopeful of finding workable solutions. But, as in any research project, much

more remains to be done. And we are committed to taking those necessary actions.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would again like to acknowledge my appreciation for having the opportunity to appear today. I believe it is vitally important that we not only deal with the security problems of today, but that we continually look ahead to the future. It is only with adequate foresight, planning, and commitment that we will be able to assure the continued safety of the traveling public in our air transportation system. We welcome the interest of this Subcommittee in helping us to attain that necessary objective, and assure you of our commitment to working both with ATF and the Congress to make sure that our Nation's response to terrorist threats is both fully responsive to today's weapons and to the potential problem of future, undetectable firearms. The high level of security of the United States air transportation system has long been a model for the world community, and we must continue to implement those measures necessary to protect our citizens traveling in this Nation's air transportation system.

That completes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to questions you may have about weapons detectability to the extent that such a discussion would not compromise our security programs.