

STATEMENT OF MONTE BELGER, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR AVIATION STANDARDS, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES AND TRANSPORTATION, CONCERNING AVIATION SECURITY. SEPTEMBER 25, 1989.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to appear before the Subcommittee today to describe briefly for you the FAA's efforts to combat the threat of terrorist activity against civil aviation. With me are Mr. Raymond Salazar, FAA's Director of Civil Aviation Security, and Mr. Gregory Walden, FAA's Chief Counsel.

The tragedy of Pan Am Flight 103 shows clearly the seriousness of the threat of terrorism to civil aviation, and necessitates that we do all that is technologically and humanly possible to reduce that threat to the traveling public. We must continue to demonstrate a firm and unwavering resolve to counter whatever new measures might be instituted by the criminals who would hold our air transportation system hostage and threaten the lives of our citizens.

To respond to the threat of terrorism, the FAA works closely with intelligence agencies to identify potential threats against civil aviation, and then to apply the appropriate measures necessary to counter those threats. It is an ever changing process because, as technology and political objectives change, so does the threat.

In the early 1970's, for example, we revolutionized the civil aviation security system by instituting a sky marshal program and by implementing a highly effective passenger screening system designed to stem the wave of hijackings being experienced at that time. But as the level and nature of the threat to the traveling public has varied, so has our response. We have continued to make changes to that system, through heightened expectations of what the system must be able to detect and through improvements to equipment, techniques, and personnel. And the system has worked remarkably well for over a decade and a half.

In 1985, Congress called on the FAA to initiate a major program to make assessments of the security of foreign airports used by U.S. air carriers. This new legislative thrust, contained in the International Security and Development Cooperation Act, significantly expanded the FAA's "global" presence in security matters and represented a measured response to a growing international threat against American aviation interests. Additional steps were taken at that time to increase funding for FAA security research and development work and to bolster security inspector and Federal Air Marshal staffing within the FAA. Further, the United States worked within the International Civil Aviation Organization to strengthen international security requirements, and the FAA took actions to enhance security requirements for U.S. carriers operating abroad.

Following the Pan Am tragedy over Scotland, FAA instituted a series of strengthened security measures to tighten U.S. air carrier security requirements at airports in Western Europe and the Middle East:

- o Airlines must now complete 100% x-ray or physical inspection of all checked baggage.
- o Passengers may not have access to the contents of checked baggage following the security inspection.
- o Airlines must perform a positive match of passenger and baggage to ensure that unaccompanied bags are not loaded onto the aircraft.
- o Airlines must take additional measures to preclude unauthorized access to baggage from check-in to loading on board the aircraft.
- o An increased number of passengers is to be randomly selected for enhanced screening. Checked baggage of the persons identified for enhanced screening must be physically inspected.
- o Small packages and parcels that are shipped through passenger ticket counters must be x-rayed or physically examined prior to shipment.

These measures impose a cost on our air transportation system and are not lightly taken by the FAA. But we have not and will not hesitate to tilt the balance toward improved security when it is necessary to protect our citizens.

In February of this year, Secretary of Transportation Skinner led the U.S. delegation attending a Special Session of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal, called as the result of a joint U.S./U.K. initiative to specifically address the sabotage of Pan Am Flight 103. As a result of that meeting, the ICAO Council unanimously adopted a resolution setting out a high priority plan of action that is currently reviewing existing international standards applicable to all operations to determine what changes are necessary.

ICAO also agreed to expedite research and development on the detection of explosives and explore the possibility of establishing an international regime for the marking or "tagging" of explosives to facilitate detection. In fact, the ICAO Assembly, to which the Council reports, is meeting now and will consider just these issues, along with other efforts to make international air travel even safer. We are arranging to have two FAA security experts seconded to ICAO to help with this work. The agreement between ICAO and the FAA should be signed shortly in Montreal. The first expert will be available around November 1 and the other should be in place by the beginning of next year.

In March, to make certain we know what all carriers serving the United States are doing to protect their operations against criminal and terrorist acts, we amended the Federal Aviation Regulations Part 129 to require foreign airlines to submit their security plans to the FAA for acceptance. The standards and recommended practices contained in Annex 17 to the ICAO Convention are being used as the yardstick against which those plans are measured. We are in the process of evaluating the plans that have been submitted and have been generally satisfied with the quality so far. In taking this action, the FAA will be better able to insure that the security precautions followed by foreign airlines serving the United States are adequate to meet the level of threat ascribed to those operations.

On April 3, Secretary Skinner announced several new aviation security initiatives after an intensive internal review of the U.S. aviation security system and after meeting with the families of the Pan Am 103 victims, Members of Congress and the President. We have made a great deal of progress on the most important of those initiatives as I will describe.

We have taken a variety of steps to improve security. In June, we established new screening procedures for portable electronic equipment before it can be checked or carried aboard an aircraft. This requirement for pre-flight screening includes radios, cassette players, laptop computers and other electronic devices to ensure they are not being used to hide an explosive device, and covers flights operated by U.S. carriers departing from cities in Europe or

the Middle East. The security requirements include a careful screening process for all passengers transporting electronic equipment using criteria designed to identify "suspicious" articles. All such items are then subjected to close examination by security personnel under a system of progressively greater scrutiny until cleared. Any item that cannot be cleared will be kept off the aircraft.

In July, after a careful examination of the way we handle security bulletins, which as the Subcommittee knows are sensitive documents intended to alert air carriers of potential security threats, we made significant changes to our security bulletin process. Bulletins, now called Security Directives, contain specific requirements for operators to follow. Further, carriers must acknowledge receipt of the Directive and advise us of what steps they are taking to deal with security threats. These measures have strengthened our processes for disseminating aviation security threat information.

We also issued a new rule which enables the FAA to require U.S. airlines to install automated explosive detection systems (EDS) for screening checked luggage on international flights at airports here and abroad. We plan to require initial installations at approximately 40 airports over the next several years. Our performance specifications are based on a Congressional mandate that explosive detection systems must be as capable as the Thermal Neutron Analysis (TNA) device, which has shown the highest degree of explosive detection currently possible for detecting known explosives. Any system approved by the FAA must be automated,

detect defined quantities and configurations of FAA-defined explosives, and be safe for operators and baggage.

Our rulemaking on EDS followed three years of FAA-directed research on the TNA explosive detection system which can detect all commercial and military explosives which might be concealed in checked baggage and air cargo. Prototype TNA systems were tested at the Los Angeles and San Francisco Airports during June 1987-March 1988 with good success. We have accelerated the delivery of six TNA units for evaluation at six airports here and abroad, and installation of equipment has begun.

We believe the TNA unit shows great promise for operating effectively in screening passenger luggage. Our experience examining over 40,000 bags using thermal neutron analysis demonstrated that it could screen baggage with both a high detection rate and a low false alarm rate. The high detection rate was attained finding minimal quantities of explosives, and would be higher with larger amounts of explosive material. The radioactive elements of the TNA system are well within prescribed safety levels and pose no threat to system operators or passengers. The first TNA system has been installed at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport.

Research also continues on an explosive vapor detection system for checking people for explosives. More work is necessary to improve the sensitivity of this system and the times it takes to process people

and baggage in an air transportation environment. We hope to have an improved device available for testing next year.

We also are continuing work to develop improved weapons detection capabilities, including efforts for the detection of plastic weapons, and are conducting an evaluation of state-of-the-art detection equipment which is commercially available. I encourage new ideas from the scientific and academic community which will help us develop even better explosive detection systems.

We are also continuing an aggressive program of foreign airport assessments called for in the International Security and Development Cooperation Act. Since the inception of this program in 1986, we have conducted more than 800 visits to 216 foreign airports in 107 countries. We have generally encountered a cooperative approach by host governments, and believe this program has aided in attaining additional security improvements at many foreign airports. The current Act enables us to conduct assessments, provides general guidance concerning the nature of assessments to be conducted, and prescribes a workable and appropriate approach toward public notification of uncorrected problems at foreign airports, all in a manner which highlights the need for a cooperative rather than unilateral approach toward solving security problems.

Clearly, to accomplish fully our aviation security responsibilities, we must have adequate numbers of trained, security inspectors. With regard to our security staffing posture, this fiscal year we are

increasing our civil aviation security workforce by an additional 56 personnel, and have requested 120 additional security personnel in our FY 1990 budget, which will bring the total security force to almost 700. These additional employees will facilitate our efforts to respond to the international threat and to continue to improve security here in the United States. The added staffing will enable us to improve the FAA presence in the most pressing areas of the world, and we have worked closely with the Department of State to facilitate the placement of additional personnel overseas.

In closing, Madam Chairwoman, I would like to emphasize the strength of our commitment to stop the threat of criminal actions directed against civil aviation. It is a difficult challenge, but one that we must meet. We look forward to continuing our work with you on these key issues which are so important to the traveling public.

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