

STATEMENT OF ROBERT E. WHITTINGTON, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, CONCERNING THE FAA'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE. MAY 11, 1989.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to discuss with you the FAA's current organizational structure.

The perspective I bring today is that of a long-term FAA careerist who has worked in a number of positions both in the field and at headquarters. Over that time, I have seen a variety of different organizational approaches adopted within the agency, with differing results--sometimes as the product of the quality of the organizational concept, sometimes as the product of the management styles of the people involved. The FAA's recent organizational changes, which I will describe shortly, are still in the early stages of implementation. Although I believe these changes are working, I also believe it will take a longer range view to confirm that is the case, and clearly I would not want to prejudice today, in any way, the ability of the forthcoming FAA Administrator to make additional refinements should that prove needed in his judgment.

Before describing the FAA's current structure, I would like to briefly highlight for the new Subcommittee Members what the FAA's

primary functions are along with the environment in which the FAA operates.

The FAA was established in 1958 to bring together, for the first time, into one agency all civil aviation safety functions of the Federal Government. Over the intervening years, the FAA has assumed some additional responsibilities in response to a changing aviation environment--such as in the aircraft noise area--but, in general, the agency's primary functions have remained constant. In brief, the FAA is responsible for: operating the Nation's air traffic control system; overseeing the manufacture of aircraft; certificating pilots and other airmen; overseeing the safety of all facets of our air transportation system; certificating airports serving airlines; administering the airport improvement grant program; and performing civil aviation security functions to assist in the prevention of hijackings and terrorist acts against civil aviation. In order to fulfill these varied and significant responsibilities, the FAA develops and implements regulations, and performs surveillance and inspections of regulated parties to ensure compliance with those regulations.

Over the past decade, work in virtually all of the FAA's work activities has increased dramatically. We are handling more air traffic than ever before, and this Subcommittee is only too well aware of the increased activity we have seen in the aviation

security area. All indications are that the pace of air transportation expansion will continue in the future.

The FAA's total workforce is nearly 49,000 people. Our predominant occupational category is within the air traffic control field where we operate 22 air traffic control centers, more than 400 towers, and in excess of 200 flight service stations. We have nearly 16,500 air traffic controllers performing air traffic control work in the FAA. We employ over 2,000 aviation safety inspectors to perform surveillance of more than 220,000 general and commercial aviation aircraft and about 1.8 million certificated airmen ranging from pilots to mechanics to flight instructors. There are approximately 400 civil aviation security inspectors who perform domestic security functions and also are responsible for airport assessments wherever U.S. carriers operate in the world. In addition, we have a workforce of approximately 8,500 electronic technicians, engineers, and related personnel who perform work in the installation, certification, and maintenance of more than 23,200 air navigation facilities, including radar, precision landing aids, and communications equipment. We also employ 600 individuals in our research, engineering, and development functions. And, of course, we have a substantial workforce performing the full range of administrative functions needed to support these other activities--human resource management, payroll, budget, contracting, and the like.

Most of the FAA's employees are employed at field facilities located in every corner of the United States, including a small number stationed at overseas locations. Many of these organizations operate on an around-the-clock basis. The basic organizational framework within which we operate includes a national headquarters here in Washington, nine regions in the United States and an office headquartered in Brussels, the Aeronautical Center in Oklahoma City (where we have our training facility, airmen and aircraft registry, medical research facility, and supply depot), and the Technical Center in Atlantic City (where much of our R&D testing occurs).

Beginning in the early 1960's, the FAA adopted a decentralized mode of operation where the Washington headquarters performed staff, policy, and technical guidance functions and the regional headquarters under the direction of a regional director managed the day to day operation of the FAA. Early last year, a review of FAA activities as part of a joint FAA-OST 45 day study confirmed that too much authority and decisionmaking had become dispersed throughout our field structure and too little central control was exercised. We heard repeatedly from the aviation community that the FAA's approach to issues varied too much from one region of the country to another, that there was not one FAA but many separate FAA's.

In July 1988, the FAA initiated a move away from the strongly decentralized approach to management which had evolved over the

years. We adopted a much more centralized approach to management, which we refer to as "straightlining." Under straightlining, our field personnel in our major disciplines (air traffic control, flight standards, airway facilities, security, aviation medicine, aircraft certification, and legal counsel) now report to their Washington headquarters counterparts, whereas before the reporting relationship was to their regional director.

Our regional directors' functions changed at that time from direct line authority over regional functions to a different role of serving as the Administrator's personal representative within a region. The new title "regional administrator" suggests that enhanced role. Today, our regional administrators are the Administrator's representative to the aviation community in their respective regions. They are key players in facilitating resolution of sensitive or controversial issues which cross organizational boundaries within a region, and they maintain a close working relationship with senior managers in all regional organizations. Additionally, they exercise management control over the organizations performing administrative support functions within their regions.

While efforts were being made to achieve greater standardization

of agency actions throughout the country through straightlining, a significant change was implemented in our headquarters structure as well. The Administrator concluded that too many individuals reported directly to him, and that there was a greater need for strategic planning by agency top management personnel who were not involved in the details of day-to-day program management. To address these objectives, the Administrator established four new executive director positions: the Executive Director for Policy, Plans, and Resource Management; the Executive Director for Regulatory Standards and Compliance; the Executive Director for System Development; and the Executive Director for System Operations.

The four executive directors provide executive direction to the FAA's associate administrators who are involved in the day-to-day management of the agency's major programs. All major field organizations within the agency now report ultimately to one of the executive directors or to the Chief Counsel. I have attached to my prepared statement a current FAA organization chart to illustrate how our organization is structured.

In addition to efforts to improve the FAA's organizational structure, there have been a number of efforts to improve the FAA's ability to perform in a variety of key areas, including procurement, personnel, and rulemaking. In the procurement area,

for example, we received a delegation of authority from the Secretary to handle FAA procurements up to \$150 million. Additionally, we identified the need for a significant increase in personnel to facilitate our contracting process, and are filling about 60 additional positions in this area. Further, we have established a senior procurement official as a point of contact in each major program office to improve the flow of communications and to speed up the procurement process. We have also established dedicated project teams at the FAA for major acquisitions to combine technical and acquisitions expertise together.

In the personnel area, we have implemented a process that streamlines the recruitment and hiring of air traffic controllers. In January, we published a revamping of our training processes in a new "Flight Plan for Training." We have proposed a demonstration project to attract controllers and safety personnel to hard-to-staff facilities at a variety of locations, and we are instituting a management intern program within the FAA to help bring future talent into the agency. We have been delegated authority by the Secretary to make personnel reassignments within the FAA below the Associate Administrator level without prior approval of OST.

With regard to rulemaking, we have closely examined the process which has too often moved too slowly. We have taken steps to

speed the process up by bringing principal parties together earlier on and more frequently so that issues can be resolved sooner rather than later. We established a central processing office for rulemakings to focus agency rulemaking in one location for timely reporting and processing. We have increased our communications with OST by providing alerts of major issues and briefings on significant agency rulemakings to facilitate the review process when our rules are transmitted to OST/OMB. And there is an FAA/OST working group, led by FAA, which is to complete a review of the rulemaking process and to make recommendations for further streamlining.

We have made progress, in concert with the Office of the Secretary, and will strive for more improvements in these areas. We have been working with Secretary Skinner and his staff to identify areas where OST can provide additional authority to the FAA through administrative action and where legislation may be needed to improve the FAA's ability to do its job. While a variety of steps have already been taken, we are confident that we can identify additional areas where further improvements can be made. We are also confident that Secretary Skinner is committed to granting the FAA whatever additional authority will bring about the highest levels of safety for the traveling public.

As we continue our efforts to improve upon our ability to fulfill our statutory missions, we will continue to assess how we are

operating in the context of our current organizational structure. In my view, as a result of straightlining, we have made progress in improving the quality of the policy guidance prepared and disseminated by Washington offices. We have also seen improvements in the uniformity and standardization of our actions nationwide. These are important dividends. But we need to evaluate how well our organizational structure is working over the long-term and to be prepared to make whatever refinements might be called for as the current FAA evolves into the future.

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