

STATEMENT OF LYNNE A. OSMUS, ACTING DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CIVIL AVIATION SECURITY POLICY AND PLANNING, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON POSTAL OPERATIONS AND SERVICES, CONCERNING THE USE OF COMMERCIAL AIRLINES TO TRANSPORT PRIORITY MAIL. APRIL 23, 1991.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee.

I am Lynne Osmus, Acting Director of FAA's Civil Aviation Security Office of Policy and Planning. I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide a statement for the record on the subject of security concerns associated with the use of commercial airlines to transport priority airmail. At the outset, I would like to say that we welcome the Subcommittee's interest in the area of airmail security.

The FAA Administrator is charged with responsibility under the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 for prescribing rules and regulations concerning civil aviation security in our nation's air transportation system. The issue of airmail security has, therefore, been of interest to us for some time, and we have had a series of meetings with Postal Service officials on this subject. Our coordination with them has taken the form of an interagency agreement, the sharing of threat information, and, recently, the

appointment of an FAA security specialist dedicated to postal issues.

Last year, the President's Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism recognized that added airmail security efforts may be necessary, and offered a number of recommendations, including the screening of airmail on a systematic basis.

Congressional concerns about the need for additional security measures in the handling of airmail were manifested in the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990, which called on the FAA to study the need for additional security when transporting mail and cargo on passenger aircraft. We are currently conducting that study, in coordination with the Postal Service, and expect it to be completed shortly.

We support the steps that the Postal Service took to improve airmail security in response to threats arising from events in the Middle East. The Postal Service acted in a timely and prudent way to help counteract mail vulnerabilities, during a time of heightened concern. We believe these measures made an important contribution to the FAA's overall aviation security efforts in behalf of the traveling public. The FAA will continue to work closely with the Postal Service on these, and future, airmail security measures.

As the Subcommittee is aware, the specific nature of the security measures that were taken by the Postal Service as well as the nature or schedule of future adjustments to those measures are sensitive matters. Much of the effectiveness of any civil aviation security program is, of course, predicated on the deterrence factor. For this reason, we are unable to describe publicly the Postal Service's airmail security procedures or future adjustments to these procedures that may be contemplated.

As I mentioned earlier, though, we are in the process of conducting a Congressionally-mandated mail and cargo study. This study will consider the need for changes in the long-term approach to mail and cargo handling on passenger aircraft. In addition, we will continue to work closely with the Postal Service to develop a framework to ensure that the security needs of the traveling public are adequately addressed in the carriage of mail. One recent step towards improvement in this area is the agreement of the Postal Service to undertake greater research and development to find ways in which to efficiently deal with mail screening.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would note that we consider mail security an important issue. Recent steps during the Gulf War provided an added measure of protection to the traveling public during a particularly difficult time. We will continue to work with the Postal Service to identify appropriate actions to be taken over the longer-term.