

STATEMENT OF MARTIN T. POZESKY, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR SYSTEM ENGINEERING AND DEVELOPMENT, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY STUDY, CONCERNING WEATHER MODERNIZATION. June 18, 1991.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you to discuss with you the FAA's weather modernization efforts. Accompanying me today is Robert Valone, our Deputy Associate Administrator for National Airspace System Development.

Our weather modernization efforts are designed to enhance our ability to observe and forecast aviation weather and disseminate that data in a timely, clear, and concise manner to all users of the national airspace system. Weather, as you undoubtedly know, is a major cause of air travel delays. The consequences of hazardous weather are well known. According to National Transportation Safety Board data, weather is a causal factor in approximately 25 percent of all aviation accidents.

The FAA's challenge is to develop and implement technology to observe and forecast meteorological conditions of interest to aviation. I would like to provide for you a brief update on one of our weather detection technologies, the Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD).

Along with the National Weather Service (NWS) and the U.S. Air Force (USAF), the FAA has been a proponent of NEXRAD since 1979.



NEXRAD is designed to enhance safety of air travel through detection of hazardous weather in the enroute environment. The FAA requirements for NEXRAD apply generally in the continental United States, with coverage in seven specific areas in Alaska, three specific sites in Hawaii and three specific areas in the Caribbean.

At that time, neither the NWS or the USAF had any weather radar requirements in Alaska, Hawaii, and the Caribbean. As a result the FAA agreed to purchase these NEXRAD systems for its own use. In the continental U.S. where the NWS did have a weather radar requirement, FAA's portion of the cost was determined to be 20 percent of the cost of these systems. Since 1979, NWS has determined that they do have a requirement for weather radars in Alaska, Hawaii and the Caribbean and now plans to receive and use data from the NEXRADs. Data sharing is a basic agreement among the sponsoring agencies. We are now working in conjunction with NWS to validate whether the originally determined seven NEXRAD systems in Alaska will meet our joint needs or whether additional systems may be necessary and to reevaluate the funding aspects of these systems.

While our original plan called for the purchase and placement of thirteen off shore NEXRAD systems, the program has encountered significant schedule delays and cost increases. In order to

-3-

address these problems, a NEXRAD recovery team, consisting of FAA, NWS and DOD officials, was established to develop and analyze alternative means of obtaining weather data radar. As a result, we are currently considering a range of options to address these problems and still meet our stated objective to provide timely, clear, and concise weather data to the aviation community. In considering all available options, our discussions with NWS have included the number, distribution, procurement, and funding of NEXRAD. While these discussions are continuing, I would like to emphasize that, to date, and pending the outcome of the current dispute with the NEXRAD contractor, no decision has been made on any of these options.

The provision of timely, reliable weather information to aviation users is a joint effort of the NWS, DOD, FAA, and a host of state and commercial organizations. The FAA works closely with the Office of the Federal Coordinator for meteorology to obtain the best weather information and user services. The comprehensive coordinating infrastructure includes seven standing committees and six program councils. We are represented on all but two of the standing committees and all but one of the program councils. We see an increasing need for aviation weather information in our National Airspace System and we will continue to work with the NWS to establish an advanced aviation weather network meet current and projected aviation needs into the 21st Century.

Mr. Chairman, that concluded my prepared statement. Mr. Valone and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.