

STATEMENT OF ANTHONY J. BRODERICK, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR REGULATION AND CERTIFICATION, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, CONCERNING SURVEILLANCE AND INSPECTION ACTIVITIES. FEBRUARY 6, 1992.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate having the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today to discuss with you the FAA's inspection and surveillance activities. This is a critical facet of the work that I oversee, and an area where both the Subcommittee and I have devoted substantial effort and focus.

I must admit that I am troubled by many of the characterizations in the General Accounting Office Report, entitled "Problems Persist in FAA's Inspection Program." In general, I find it disturbing that very little credit is given to the tremendous efforts we have made or the progress we have achieved with the strong support and watchful eye of this Subcommittee. For that reason, the report, in my view, provides little balance and does not realistically portray for this Subcommittee or the American public where we stand in our efforts to improve our airline surveillance and inspection programs. The report also contains a number of statements, which reflect a limited understanding of much of the technical nature of the work we do, and also suffers

-2-

in some cases from faulty statistical analysis or outdated information.

Rather than dwell on the GAO report, though, I would refer the Subcommittee to the FAA's comments to the initial draft GAO report, which are set out in the GAO final report. I will, of course, be pleased to elaborate on any of these points or to respond later to any questions you may have about the GAO report. What I would like to do, today, is to outline briefly for you where the FAA is in its inspection and surveillance activities, touch on a little about our philosophies that underlie these programs, and give you an insight into where we are going.

The first point that is important to make is that our inspection program today in the early 1990's has been wholly revamped from our inspection program of the mid-1980's. It is a far more vigorous program, and it is far better managed at the national level with clearly defined objectives and goals.

Inspector staffing, for example, has nearly doubled in recent years--from 1,331 in 1983 to 2,557 in 1992. This growth, which has been facilitated by your strong support, while providing us far greater surveillance capabilities than before, has not been without its management challenges. Recruiting, training, equipping, and effectively managing and using this expanded

-3-

workforce have all required a tremendous amount of planning and effort on our part. Let me take a few moments to highlight for you some of the changes we have made, in order to add some perspective with which to contrast the GAO's assertions about the problems that persist.

Today, our inspectors operate within a system in which the handbooks they follow for guidance (nearly 2,000 pages of detailed instructional material) are far more complete and up to date than ever before; in fact, all handbooks will have been completely redone before the end of this fiscal year. Our inspectors now have a set of national program guidelines pursuant to which the goals for numbers and types of inspections to be conducted are established, and regional and field office work programs are developed to further guide their efforts.

Information on problems found in one area of the country with a particular carrier or on developing trends is now being made available to inspectors anywhere through an automated system. Major "white glove" inspections are conducted systematically, using inspectors from various locales, targetting either on particular segments of the aviation industry or on particular carriers.

Inspector training is better planned and carried out, using a roadmap we have developed called the "Strategic Master Plan for

-4-

Training." A system called the Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem (PTRS) provides our inspector workforce with computerized forecasting, plans of work programs, schedules employee resources, tracks and modifies work programs, and stores, retrieves, and transmits key data within the FAA.

FAA inspectors now work within a straightlined organization, in which program guidance and management is provided through the national headquarters, leading to greater standardization throughout the country. Significant management issues that affect the inspector workforce are strategically assessed through a top management council, comprised of top headquarters and regional management officials, with three executive committees--a Planning and Resource Management Committee, a Training and Automation Committee, and a Program Management Committee.

In brief, the environment in which our inspection programs function has dramatically changed--and for the better. We have made progress in virtually every facet of our programs, and I believe we have done so while still recognizing the need for our inspectors to be able to exercise professional judgment and while providing the flexibility needed to address real-time issues on a real-time basis. This past year, for example, we have emphasized aging aircraft inspections, we responded to the challenge of Operations Desert Shield and Storm through a special inspection

-5-

program for civil reserve aircraft operations, and, as I committed to the Chairman last Fall, we initiated a special inspection of Continental Express. The need to adjust our work activities to respond to new challenges is something that is not readily captured in a sterile analysis of numbers and types of inspections.

There is much value to establishing and working toward a National Work Program, but rigid adherence to that program, as some would apparently argue for, without departure is neither realistic nor acceptable. It is FAA policy--and will remain FAA policy--to continue to intensify surveillance of airlines with labor-management problems, that have experienced a series of incidents or accidents, which are undergoing merger, or which show signs of financial distress. It would not be in the public interest to do otherwise, and to the extent that means the inspection goals we have set for ourselves are sometimes not achievable I am comfortable with that result. We target our resources where we believe they will do the most good, and readjust when necessary to accommodate new or changed circumstances.

I certainly do not want to suggest, today, that our inspection programs cannot be improved. They can and will be. Training has not been accomplished as rapidly as I would like. The automated equipment we have provided our inspectors in the past has not been

-6-

adequate. We need to complete the introduction of new automated equipment into our workforce, and provide further training on these systems. Our tracking systems need improvement. But all of these factors are known to us, and we are systematically working on achieving needed improvement. It has been an evolutionary process getting to the point we are today, and much more remains to be done. But I can assure you that our surveillance activities are properly managed, we do know what our workforce is doing, we do direct our resources in the way that yields the greatest public benefit, and we have concrete plans to achieve further progress.

For example, we have worked to phase out the outdated automation equipment previously relied upon by our inspector workforce, have begun the introduction of faster, more reliable, and more user friendly equipment to our inspectors, and are taking steps to increase the availability of the new equipment to our inspectors. This year, we will be finalizing plans for further procurement and deployment of additional equipment.

We have been working for more than one year on the development of an industry risk assessment program, called Safety Performance Analysis System (SPAS). We began prototyping this system at headquarters and several field locations last month, and will continue this test and evaluation through the remainder of this fiscal year. We plan to implement the core program of this system

10

nationwide this coming fiscal year. By helping us better target inspections and the need for increased surveillance, this automated tracking and analysis system will help us more efficiently direct our resources where they are most needed.

As I mentioned earlier, by the end of this year, we will have completed the total revision, updating, and distribution of all handbooks for our inspector workforce, the culmination of more than seven years of effort.

We have also been working on a new system that will permit our inspectors nationwide to readily identify any FAA policy guidance on a particular subject through a simple search feature. This system, available in March, will help standardize application of our regulatory requirements and surveillance policy throughout the country.

We have developed and distributed to our workforce a strategic management plan, which establishes a long-term framework for the conduct of our Flight Standards activities, and calls for a yearly management plan to address significant Flight Standards issues. This year's issues are training, employee recognition, and global surveillance and certification. This strategic plan will help keep us on track with where we want to be, both today and in the future.

-8-

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reemphasize the importance we place on a vigorous surveillance program with strong, but not rigid, management controls. I am pleased with the ability of the inspectors and supervisors we have performing this important work, and am confident we are taking the steps needed to continue to make progress in this program.

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