

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID R. HINSON, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, CONCERNING AVIATION SECURITY TECHNOLOGY. SEPTEMBER 19, 1996.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Earlier today, we provided you a briefing in closed session, and I appreciate your recognition that much of the work we do in the security area cannot be publicly disclosed.

At this time, I would like to summarize for the public some of the important security issues facing the FAA. Joining me today are Admiral "Irish" Flynn, FAA's Associate Administrator for Civil Aviation Security, and Admiral Paul Busick, Director of the Office of Intelligence and Security in the Department of Transportation.

Following Pan Am 103, and the legislation that was enacted as the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990, we have achieved great progress in aviation security. I highlighted this morning some of our key accomplishments, such as certification of the CTX-5000 explosive detection system. We could not have made this progress without this Committee's support of our research, engineering and development program, which has been crucial to developing the next generation of counter-terrorism technology.

Today's security system has been effective in countering the threat we previously faced from hijackings, and was successful in meeting the objectives for which it was designed. At the same time, we recognize that the threat we face is constantly changing, and that terrorists have grown increasingly sophisticated. The security system must be capable of adapting to meet these new challenges. We also recognize that what was once a foreign



threat is now a domestic one as well, as evidenced by the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings. Although TWA 800 has not been shown to be the result of a terrorist act, it nonetheless has caused us to reflect on the current threat and the best ways to counter it.

Following TWA 800, the President appointed a Commission, headed by Vice President Gore, that was asked to investigate and report on aviation safety and security. The Commission's initial report to the President contains a number of important initiatives, concerning security equipment, procedures and personnel, and we have requested funds from Congress to enable us to carry out the initiatives.

One of their key recommendations, for which we have requested Congress' support, is the deployment of certified explosives detection systems and other equipment, such as dual-energy X-rays, for screening checked baggage at U.S. airports. Another important improvement to the security system is the deployment of equipment such as trace detectors to screen carry-on bags. We expect to deploy this equipment widely, so that passengers throughout the aviation system will receive the benefits of the enhancements. We anticipate that this equipment will be in place at airports while we continue field-testing and developing new technology.

Placing equipment in the field is an important step, but it is also necessary to ensure that the personnel who operate the equipment are properly trained and qualified. Our

Screeener Proficiency Evaluation and Reporting System, or SPEARS, helps enhance screener performance using both X-ray machines and the CTX-5000, and is now ready for field deployment. We have also requested funds to increase our security staff, both here and abroad, to support our ability to gather threat information and respond quickly and decisively.

We recognize that these security enhancements are not cheap, either in terms of dollars or in terms of inconvenience or intrusiveness for passengers. There are important and difficult balances that must be struck between safety and the costs needed to bring about that safety. That is especially true in the context of the U.S. aviation system, which is the largest and the most complex in the world. It is necessary to consider the practical impact on airline operations and passengers, and the security system must be tailored to take that into account.

In conclusion, let me say that we welcome your interest and help in this area. Many difficult decisions lie ahead, both for the executive branch and the Congress. We look forward to working with you as we carry out the recommendations of the Vice President's Commission. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have at this time.