

**TESTIMONY****STATEMENT OF ROBERT W. BAKER  
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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
342 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510****SEPTEMBER 25, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Federal Government's role in addressing aircraft and airport security issues.

September 11th has changed world aviation forever. We can only speculate on the precise changes that will result from this horrible event. However, I think there are two broad directions that we must pursue promptly to preserve our air transportation system.

First, we must decide on specific changes to airline and aviation security operations that will provide a higher level of deterrence and make it much more difficult for terrorists to repeat the attacks on our country. Second, we must make those changes which will provide confidence in our aviation system to both the travelling public and our employees. If we do not restore confidence in aviation, will not be able to restore operations and the American public will not be willing to travel by air. This would obviously have profound impacts on our industry and the U.S. economy, since there is no practical alternative mode for most intercity travel in the United States.

A week ago Sunday, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta announced the formation of two rapid response task forces to provide recommendations in two areas: aircraft security and airport security. I was honored to be asked to participate in this effort. For the last week we have been gathering input, examining alternatives, and establishing priorities. We are committed to provide the Secretary with recommendations not later than October 1 and we will meet that objective. I anticipate both short term and longer-term recommendations.

Let me briefly discuss two of the subjects being dealt with by the rapid response task forces. Both of these projects enhance aviation security and also have a positive impact on the confidence of our employees and the travelling public. One of our focus areas is the hardening of the cockpit to prevent terrorist entry. This will likely involve modifications to aircraft bulkheads and doors and the adoption of procedures to reduce the exposure when the cockpit door must be opened in flight. We are processing close to 100 ideas and suggestions.

The second area that is receiving a lot of interest and attention is the airport security checkpoint. You often hear about the federalization of the checkpoint. The airlines have said for many years that the operation of checkpoint security should not be the responsibility of the airlines. If you

look outside the United States, other countries typically both operate and fund all aviation security activities. I believe that making material changes in the checkpoint operation represents an important opportunity to both enhance security and improve public confidence.

There is an approach, which I believe, makes sense and should be debated. I believe that there are three aviation security functions that we need going forward. First, a high caliber, professionally operated checkpoint that deters those with a negative agenda and a system which restores passenger confidence. Second, the deployment of a sky marshal function onboard domestic aircraft. Third, an ongoing surveillance and audit process to ensure that security procedures and policies are adhered to by airlines, airports, and aviation vendors. Perhaps these could be combined and performed by a government owned corporation made up mostly of federal law enforcement officers.

In response to your first two inquiries regarding the airline's role in screening passengers and baggage, each airline is required to conduct screening in accordance with the procedures, facilities and equipment described in its FAA approved Air Carrier Security Program (ACSSP). The program is designed to prevent or deter the carriage of any explosive, incendiary, or a deadly or dangerous weapons on a passenger or in their checked or carry on bags. The specifics of the program are considered to be confidential by the FAA. Generally, the program uses various x-ray machines, explosive trace detection devices and visual inspections to prevent the carriage of dangerous weapons or devices on board our aircraft.

In most instances, security checkpoint functions are performed for the air carrier by a contract security provider in accordance with the air carrier's standard security program and FAA regulations. Individual security screeners are hired and trained in the specifics of the program and the use of the security equipment by the contract security provider. The hiring standards are provided under FAA regulations. Background checks of the individual's last 10-year employment history are conducted. A 10-year criminal history check will similarly be conducted for those individuals with inconsistencies or gaps in their employment history. Local air carrier management provides oversight of the security provider's compliance with the Federal requirements and specific security measures.

Mr. Chairman, I have been involved in commercial aviation for 40 years. There has never been anything that has had more impact on our country, our industry, and our employees than the events of September 11th. I do know one thing; we can never have another September 11th.

I'll be pleased to take your questions.

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