

at the same time don't want to rest on our laurels. We want to continue to keep on doing even better.

One other quick question. I will submit other questions for the record. I am sure there is an explanation for it. I don't know that it has been made part of the record. We have this organization chart of your Agency from Mr. Sabatini all the way down, and the aviation safety inspectors, supervisor. Principal Maintenance Inspector Douglas Gawadzinski has been mentioned often. He has not been here. I think there should be some reason why.

And then the other issues I would like to ask Mr. Scovel if there have been comments that Mr. Gawadzinski was talking to people at headquarters or this or that. Did you uncover or did you discover any of that, or was he basically speaking without authority, so to speak?

Mr. SCOVEL. Mr. Petri, it is our understanding that, in fact, he did know officials at FAA headquarters. To the extent he is embellishing his relationship with them so he could puff himself up in the eyes of colleagues down in the Southwest CMO, that appears certainly to have been happening, as well.

Mr. PETRI. Any of you like to respond? Mr. Sabatini? I think both of your names have been mentioned. Mr. Stuckey?

Mr. BALLOUGH. Yes, Mr. Petri, thank you very much for the opportunity. Yes, it is true. I know Doug Gawadzinski, just like I know a lot of my workforce. I spend a lot of time on the road to interact with those folks. Mr. Gawadzinski came to New York when Nick and I were in New York together and spent 90 days on a detail. He then went back to the southwest region. Since 2001, when I became the Director of Flight Standards Service, I have talked to him or seen him a very limited number of times. Certainly the portrayal today of daily conversations with Mr. Gawadzinski or the inference by the management in the Southwest CMO that I somehow had some kind of relationship with Mr. Gawadzinski is just not factual, sir.

I state for the record that I have been absolutely consistent, from the day I became the Director of this organization and went out and talked to the field. I attend every management team meeting at the regions and speak to the supervisory ranks as well as at offices. I have been absolutely consistent for the last seven years that I expect, number one, standardization; number two, that following national policy is paramount for me. It always has been. So this notion that he had somehow had some dispensation from following national policy is a fabrication.

Mr. PETRI. Thank you, sir.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Now, Mr. Sabatini, you knew on July 12, 2007, of the incidents at Southwest. A report was completed, correct?

Mr. SABATINI. I am not sure of the exact date, sir, but certainly—

Mr. OBERSTAR. In July?

Mr. SABATINI. In that time frame. That would be correct.

Mr. OBERSTAR. But that is the date given to the document of completion of the inquiry. Why did you wait until March of this year to audit other airlines?

Mr. SABATINI. We didn't know the gravity at that time of what was going on at the Southwest CMO.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Shouldn't something have gone off and said maybe we ought to take a look at the system? Since we are operating on a system—ATOS—maybe something else amiss?

What I am getting at is that there is an over-reliance on ATOS, and that if it is so successful, why is it that old-fashioned inspector feet on the ground, on shop floors, and engine rooms, are finding airworthiness directive compliance issues affected hundreds of aircraft? In other words, you need more people, you need more inspectors, need more hands-on work, and I want you to think hard about this, notwithstanding directives from Office of Management and Budget—we have gone through this with other FAA leadership in years past and other Administrations—work with us to develop an inspector workforce need list that we can realistically deliver on. Will you do that?

Mr. SABATINI. You have my commitment, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you.

Now, the customer service initiative, what do you think about, what was your reaction? What was your gut reaction when you heard the statement in the earlier testimony from the whistleblower panel, the customer, Southwest, called the FAA and complained about the service they were getting from Mr. Boutris to get him removed? What was your reaction to that?

Mr. SABATINI. Unacceptable. That is simply an abuse of what our customer service initiative was intended to be. It was a mechanism to allow citizens of the United States who contact the FAA to express whatever concerns they may have, not to be used as a vehicle to accommodate a like or dislike about a particular inspector.

I will say time and time again, we are responsible for enforcement. Voluntary programs do not mean that we have abandoned enforcement. We will continue to enforce the regulations. Our mission is to gain full compliance and to operate at the highest levels of safety. You have my commitment, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Then I hope I have your commitment also to revisit this customer service initiative and re-aim it and redirect it, and thereby redirect back to its original purpose the mission, the safety mission of FAA.

Mr. SABATINI. You have my commitment, Mr. Chairman. I am planning to do that.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you. That may be the most significant thing accomplished today.

Are there others who have questions? Mr. Costello?

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Chairman, I really do not have any other questions, but I would like to make a comment and express a concern, and that is Mr. Sabatini has been before our Subcommittee many times, and we have talked about safety and other issues. You know, frankly, my concern is this: that you have pointed out, and rightly so, that 99 percent of the planes that have been recently inspected are in full compliance. Frankly, I think that the Agency continues to rely on the fact that we have the safest system, aviation system, in the world. I know you are proud of the fact that 99 percent are in full compliance, but again I go back to my comments in my opening statement, and that is—and I don't think that you would disagree with me, and if you do I want to hear it, but there is no question when it came to runway safety that the FAA