

DEPM's review for 20 days. This again is contrary to ATOS data quality guidelines and the required disciplinary action on the DEPM was not taken.

At this point, I was fed up with the office environment and how I was being unfairly treated by management and certain inspectors. I requested to be transferred to another office in the local area. I was finally told by the manager, Mr. Hedlund, that I received a transfer to the DFW FSDO. This meeting took place in my cubicle. During the conversation, my supervisor walked up, walked by and made some comments, then flipped me off with both fingers from both his hands, in front of the manager.

I sent a grievance to the region and I requested immediate removal from the office. The SAI letter addressing the findings during the SAI 1.3.6 still had not left the office. I do not know what the final letter looked like, since I was no longer employed in the office. I also cannot take ownership of the final SAI, since I believe the data has been manipulated since my departure.

I made every attempt to complete this assignment in the most professional manner humanly possible. I followed national policies and guidance through the entire process. I pride myself as a public servant to make every attempt to make the safest transportation system in the world. I swore an oath to do just that.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you, Mr. Bassler.

Mr. Collamore, do you have a separate statement?

Mr. COLLAMORE. No, sir, I don't.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Okay, thank you. Thank you very much for your testimony. I appreciate your candor and your forthrightness.

Mr. Kelleher and Mr. Kelly, Southwest Airlines is not on trial here. I want you to understand that. Your customer satisfaction rating is not on trial or in question. What is at stake in this hearing is the role of the FAA and the compliance with the Airworthiness Directives.

At the very outset of all this disclosure, there was a statement, initial public statement from Southwest Airlines, implying that it had received concurrence from Boeing that it was acceptable to continue flying the aircraft. Those were statements from Southwest reported in the news media, copies of which we have received. Is it Boeing's responsibility to give approval on Airworthiness Directive matters, or is that the FAA's responsibility?

Mr. KELLEHER. Mr. Chairman, I think there has been a mistake there with respect to what you read. We never asked the Boeing Company to deal with the subject of regulatory compliance. We simply asked the Boeing Company whether or not there were any safety of flight issues involved in flying those airplanes for the eight days that it took to re-inspect them. The Boeing statement itself specifically says, we are not addressing the issue of regulatory compliance.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Did they put that in writing to Southwest?

Mr. KELLEHER. I believe it is.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Would you submit that for the record, so we can have the record correct on that matter?

Mr. KELLEHER. Yes, sir, absolutely.

Mr. OBERSTAR. It certainly gave a very inappropriate impression to my investigative mind and my experience.

Mr. KELLEHER. Yes, I understand that. But they didn't opine on the regulatory aspect of it. They just said that they didn't think there was any threat to the safety of flight during those eight days, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I appreciate your refreshing candor in saying, we should not have flown when we found those cracks.

Mr. KELLEHER. Thank you, sir. We respect this Committee and will always be candid with it.

Mr. OBERSTAR. And I also appreciate your reciting, which I did earlier in the hearing, the events that led up to the aging aircraft legislation, the meeting out here at Crystal City with over 400 aviation safety professionals from around the world that eventually resulted in the legislation and the Airworthiness Directive that took FAA an inordinately long time to publish.

Now, I don't want to be nit-picking, but it bothers me to hear someone of your caliber to say it was a tiny part of the aircraft. It was a tiny part of that Aloha 737 that began to unravel. It always starts with a tiny part. That is why Airworthiness Directives are issued and that is why there is a requirement for rigorous inspection. I stipulated at the outset that this Aloha aircraft was one that had 89,000 cycles.

I should have gone further, which I do in other contexts, and point out that that aircraft had flown over the continental United States for most of its lifetime. Then it was, for a few years, put in service with Aloha over salt air in a salt air environment. As we know, those of us who follow these matters, when an aircraft is pressurized, the skin expands microscopically. Moisture is taken out of the interior of the aircraft and condenses around the hull and drains around the sides. With the 727, by the time it reaches altitude, it has drained 120 gallons of moisture out of the interior of the aircraft. And it drains out of weepholes, but not all of it drains out. When it lands and is decompressed, some of that moisture remains.

In the case of the Aloha, some of that moisture, some of that water had an electrolytic reaction with the aluminum-copper skin of the aircraft that proved to be fatal. It is secondly true that Boeing abandoned the cold bond method of manufacturing aircraft hull for much more stable and reliable method.

But the point was that what should not have happened, what was designed not to happen, what had never happened before, did happen. The same with the PCU, the power control unit and the rudder. It should not have happened. Boeing came into my office in the aftermath about Aliquippa and said, we have flown 93 million hours of 737s and this has never happened before.

But it had. The NTSB, God bless them, went back after Aliquippa to look at previous incidents, uncommanded rudder movement incident for which they had not found a probable cause, and attributed to the failure of the PCU that caused an uncommanded rudder movement. That corresponded with other similar incidents reported by pilots enroute that raised concerns about the PCU and Boeing then went back and re-engineered, did an enormous amount of work and Southwest, I know, was engaged in that practice.

I go to this extent to say, these Airworthiness Directives have very significant weight. And that it is not acceptable, it is not ac-

ceptable within FAA regulatory proceeding to fly beyond the airworthiness directive mandatory inspection time.

Mr. KELLEHER. It is certainly not, Mr. Chairman. Everything that you have said is 100 percent right, and I don't disagree with anything you have stated. Your knowledge is really all-encompassing regarding this matter.

When I said a tiny part, I didn't mean to demean the significance of it. That comment was made in the context of 1,100 pages covering 6 ADs and the failure of the engineering order to cover that tiny part of the airplane. What I was saying was, not that it was, not that any airplane part is insignificant. I didn't mean to convey that. But what I meant was, out of the whole airplane, with 1,100 pages and 6 ADs, the engineer missed a small part.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Yes, I understand that. And there is some traffic on the websites of various skeptics saying, oh, there are way too many Airworthiness Directives, they are way too complex, way too many pages for us. Well, if there are, then you'd better find something else to do. Because at 35,000 feet in the air, there is no curb to pull over, look under the hood and find out what is wrong. You have to do it right. That is why there is redundancy built into aviation. You understand it. You have a safety mind set, I appreciate that.

Mr. KELLEHER. Yes, sir. And what I was suggesting, again, that is not an excuse.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Good.

Mr. KELLEHER. That is not an excuse. I was just saying, I can understand how an engineer would miss a tiny part of the airplane in the midst of all this hullabaloo. If you will, if my recollection is correct, Mr. Chairman, yesterday, Administrator Sturgell said himself during his press conference that some of these ADs maybe need to be simplified, so that they are crisper and easier to understand.

Again, that is not an excuse. But it would, making them plainer and simpler and unified would facilitate, I think, understanding them.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I would be very, look with a very skeptical eye on any simplification they would do.

But what is the status of the Southwest employees you announced had been placed on administrative leave? Mr. Kelly?

Mr. KELLY. They are at home. They are on leave, they are being paid pending our investigation.

Mr. OBERSTAR. They are not at work, they are not at a desk?

Mr. KELLY. They are not. And of course, our investigation is weeks old at this point, so we are not complete yet. But yes, they are on leave.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you.

Mr. Petri.

Mr. PETRI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank you, the witnesses, for putting in a long day here at the Capitol. Just trying to shift the focus a little bit to kind of looking forward, because what we want to do is certainly learn from the past and do better in the future, and in that regard, I would really be interested in hearing your discussion of how you build safety into an organization and how you work with the people who have responsi-