

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you, Mr. Carney, and members of the panel, I want to thank you. But before we conclude, the Inspector General made several suggestions and I am sure you heard those, let me repeat. Recommending the establishment of an independent body to investigate inspector concerns, do you think that is a good idea?

Mr. ANDREWS. Can I speak to that?

Mr. OBERSTAR. Certainly.

Mr. ANDREWS. I think that is an excellent idea. A question came up a while ago about the manipulation of the ATOS data. Less than two months ago, I wrote a hot line complaint to the Inspector General, and part of the problem I addressed was the manipulation of inspection data. The IG apparently felt that it wasn't within their purview, and they forwarded that complaint down to the Federal Aviation Administration Flight Standards Division.

And guess where they sent it? They sent it down to the two guys that I wrote it about to answer. So I don't think our existing hot line is effective in any way at all. In the past, I have used the Administrator's hot line and I have used the IG hot line as a lever to move this organization where I saw a serious problem and couldn't address it from the floor up.

Mr. OBERSTAR. As the first panel today said, or Mr. Boutris said, I signed my name.

Mr. ANDREWS. I did too, every time. Every time I have submitted one, I put my name and phone number.

Mr. OBERSTAR. So what is a whistleblower, unidentified whistleblower line going to do? If they don't pay attention when you sign it, then how are you going to pay attention if you don't sign it?

Mr. ANDREWS. Exactly. I have never asked for whistleblower protections and I have never submitted an anonymous complaint. I think if you are going to have an effective hot line, and I think you need an effective hot line, it is going to have to be something similar to the way a police department works, like a civilian review board that has no outside or governmental interest one way or the other.

Mr. OBERSTAR. The question is, we are going to have an independent body, the IG said, recommended that the FAA established it. I think that would be dangerous.

Mr. ANDREWS. Absolutely.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Who should be the originating entity to create an independent body? Mr. Brantley?

Mr. BRANTLEY. Mr. Chairman, as everyone has said, another internal hot line is the last thing the FAA needs. I think this needs to be set up by, it has to be independent. I think the IG could probably come up with some regulations for that very quickly. And with all respect to both the Inspector General and the Office of Special Counsel, I would have a hard time recommending to any of the members that I represent that they go anywhere but one of those two places. Because there is nothing internal to the FAA that will get their problems resolved without them becoming a target.

Mr. OBERSTAR. That is absolutely right. I have been mulling this over and probably a combination of recommendations by the Inspector General, the Comptroller General, the General Accounting

Office or Government Accountability Office and maybe Mr. Bloch's office.

Mr. BRANTLEY. Absolutely.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Or a recommendation from the NTSB, which has independent authority. Something of that nature.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Oberstar, if I might, I have to tell you, too, I was amazed to sit here today and listen to Mr. Stuckey and Mr. Ballough and Mr. Sabatini speak about what heroes they thought Mr. Boutris and Mr. Peters are. Because it has been my experience over the last years that people like Mr. Boutris and Mr. Peters and these gentlemen sitting here next to me are not treated like heroes by the FAA.

Mr. OBERSTAR. They certainly weren't until this hearing.

Mr. ANDREWS. That is exactly right. And they generally define this as problem employees or disgruntled. That is why the people in our organization are afraid to stand up and be counted. The culture inside the FAA is, there is no problem in my unit, there is no problem in my office, there is no problem in my region and there is no problem in the FAA. Until the FAA admits that we have serious problems, they are not going to be able to fix themselves.

Mr. MCNEASE. I would like to say that I do agree with an outside agency, however it is set up. The hot line deal doesn't work, because it does come right back down to the inspector. And everybody knows who it comes back to. But you mentioned earlier, and you mentioned in one of your press conferences prior to this that we need to clean house here. It needs to start from the top. I think all of us agree here on this panel in particular that it certainly needs to happen from the top. That is Mr. Sabatini, Mr. Ballough and Mr. Stuckey. If you think integrity is an issue, there is more to check into. There are a lot of integrity problems.

It is just unfortunate that they have been allowed to take us down this route. I believe they have done it. I believe that when Mr. Sabatini said, the buck stops here, I agree, it stops there. And it should stop there and action should be taken.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you. Mr. Thrash?

Mr. THRASH. I would like to piggyback on what Mr. McNease said. The ferret, warm-blooded animal, was used before the common era, you have to say BCE any more to be sensitivity proper, but nevertheless, it was used to exterminate vermin for ages and ages and ages. It looks like a mink and it is small and warm-blooded and thin-bodied and they can be domesticated.

They were introduced into the United States in the 1800s from sailing ships, because they were infested with rats. The sailors didn't like the rat terriers, because they barked and kept them awake. The cats were a favorite, but the rats could get into the hold and the cats couldn't get them.

But when they brought the ferrets in, the rats didn't have any place to go. And of course, if you have some rats in the rafters higher up in these places here in the Washington area and the division area, the term, metaphorically of course, rats of abuse, metaphorically speaking, obviously, the term "ferret out" comes from that. And you all have the horsepower to get that done.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you.

We are going to use that horsepower, and today's hearing was a launch pad to do that. Your testimony and those of your colleagues preceding you are powerful tools for us to use to improve aviation safety.

The real question is, does the buck really stop with Mr. Sabatini? Or does it go higher? That is a question that we aren't really going to know until there is a sweeping change of administration and a new administrator and we begin making corrections from the top down.

My Italian grandfather immigrated from Naples. When you look at a fish, you know whether it is good or not if the head is in good shape. But if the head is rotting, then the whole fish is no good. And we have to take a good look at this fish.

Thank you very much for your testimony, for your candor, for your courage in coming forward. This has been a most enlightening and invigorating hearing. We will proceed forward with lessons learned today.

The Committee stands adjourned. I thank Members for persisting throughout this day as well.

[Whereupon, at 7:37 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]