

Mr. DEFAZIO. Okay. So you were not able to get there in a capacity of oversight and inspection because there were just too many of them.

Mr. MILLS. Right.

Mr. DEFAZIO. But you were torn away from those other duties to hand deliver a package that could have been mailed or they could have gotten on the internet about the customer service initiative.

Mr. MILLS. That is correct. We had to visit them personally.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Anybody else want to comment on this thing?

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am over my time. I will have more questions later.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mrs. Capito.

Mrs. CAPITO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that I will hold my questions until later. I appreciate it.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

I appreciate the testimony I heard earlier today, and I am glad to have the opportunity to ask a few questions.

Let me initially direct my line of questioning to Mr. Mills. I am thinking about how we go forward from, this point in time, and you point out the value of the self-disclosure programs, but that it is highly dependent upon the integrity of those that are implementing that disclosure program. In your opinion, who is in the best position to exercise the oversight of the Voluntary Disclosure Reporting Program, at what level, what position?

How do we prevent what you describe happening from happening again?

Mr. MILLS. I am not sure that at the journeyman inspector level is the place for it. Perhaps, those individuals could be participants, but I think there needs to be more review at an upper level of that. I am not sure what level.

But it is, in this case, something that was terribly abused, and I would say I would start perhaps at the manager level, office manager level.

Mr. MORAN. Can you briefly describe for me the scenario?

When you say it was seriously abused in this circumstance, describe for me, again, that scenario. Where was the failure?

Mr. MILLS. Well, the failure was on the part of the principal maintenance inspector who, because of his cozy relationship with Southwest, was not only accepting the self-disclosures but encouraging the operator to file them so that they wouldn't have to, so that he wouldn't have to file enforcement actions against them. Of course, enforcement actions are a matter of record and self-disclosures are not.

So that, I hope that answers your question.

Mr. MORAN. It does.

The supervisory principal maintenance inspector that you just mentioned, his personality you talked about and his inference of his connections, rapport with those in more senior positions. Does that accurately describe what you testified to earlier?

Mr. MILLS. Yes, it was a very strange situation. I presumed that much of his hype, self-hype, was just that, self-hype, but there were certain instances that occurred during my relationship with him

that led me to wonder if, in fact, some of his purported support might have some legs.

For example, I do know that Mr. Gawadzinski and Mr. Ballough were engaged in some sort of assessment of the staffing of my office, and I found that out as the second hand, and I always wondered why Mr. Ballough didn't afford me the courtesy of letting me know that that was happening.

On another instance, we were attending, excuse me, a conference at Southwest Airlines headquarters where Mr. Sabatini was speaking, and our management team from the office was invited, and we sat at separate tables. Mr. Sabatini and his entourage sat at one table, and we sat at another one. And, Mr. Gawadzinski abandoned our group and went over and sat with Mr. Sabatini and his entourage for the duration of the conference.

And, of course, that was not lost on our management team or Southwest Airlines for that matter and probably gave him a good deal of imprimatur in terms of his success in thwarting what we were doing.

Mr. MORAN. The effect this appearance of this relationship had, what is the consequence of that appearance?

People believed that there was a relationship that may affect their jobs if they crossed?

Mr. MILLS. Absolutely and, of course, for Southwest Airlines, that gave him a certain degree of appearance of influence that he might not ordinarily have had.

For my office, the people in my office who reported to him, it certainly elevated his stature in their eyes and made life a lot more difficult for me.

Mr. MORAN. Did he do things that would merit his termination and, if so, why was he not terminated?

Mr. MILLS. On at least five occasions, I sent to the regional office, and I have records of it, instances of misdeed that he was doing that certainly warranted an investigation, and it was not until I reported the Southwest overflight of the AD, that investigation actually occurred to my knowledge.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Mills, thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me the time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Carney, the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We just came off of our votes and I was down on the floor, speaking with a number my colleagues, and they really had question as to why all of a sudden American and Delta and United pulled significant chunks of their fleet down for inspections all at once. We hear about the creep in the system, and certainly I have to echo Mr. DeFazio's concerns about this.

I would like your assessment on why this is going on now, suddenly, Mr. Peters.

Mr. PETERS. Like I spoke about earlier, ATOS is generic and it was designed to be generic for all 121 carriers. I believe the FAA ensured that all 121 carriers would fall under the ATOS oversight program sometime in 2007 or early 2008.

In doing so, the baseline inspections that were required by ATOS in the early days, the baseline requirement for inspections was a little bit higher, and I don't know the numbers exactly. But if we