

that question just specific for Southwest, that GE is following Southwest Airlines' procedures.

Now how can you tell the inspector who works for Continental Airlines you have to accept that answer because I don't know what Continental's procedures are. I know what the regulations are, but each airline has above and beyond procedures in place for that.

So the answer to that was from the group leader, that well, that is why they have CASS in place which is a Continuous Analysis and Surveillance System for an airline. So they are going back then to self-policing themselves. So if you are going to accept the answer from their program for the CASS program, why go and do the inspection at all? Just accept their whole inspection then.

So you see there is disconnect there, and as of today that is what is happening. We are sending team inspectors out there to do team inspections, and then you look at their findings, and then you accept what they have found. However, you are not ensuring that your airline is really part of it.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chairman, is my time up?

Mr. OBERSTAR. Your time is expiring.

Ms. HIRONO. I saw a hand.

Mr. OBERSTAR. If you have a follow-on comment, you may do it.

Ms. HIRONO. Well, I saw a hand going up, Mr. Peters, and really briefly if you care to comment.

Mr. PETERS. Well, it will be brief, and I would like to respond to that.

If we are having trouble seeing the carriers in the Country, how can we effectively oversee carriers that are outsourcing their maintenance?

The inspection team that would go and inspect this foreign repair station to the air carrier's standards would have to be very familiar with that particular air carrier, and in the ATOS world that is an air carrier specific briefing that is a requirement by each certificate office that oversees the carrier that they are assigned to.

So, how can we say that it is an equivalent level of inspection when we have inspectors that do a great job in an international field office that might go in once a year for recertification of that repair station, not know American or Southwest or United or whatever the carrier's procedures are?

It takes quite a bit of time and effort. These carriers are so complex and their maintenance program is embedded in several different areas throughout the carrier manual system. For us to go in there and give it a one shot quick inspection, calling it a recertification and not knowing how the system works for that particular carrier, I don't think we could honestly say to the Committee or to the flying public that it is an equivalent level of safety.

Ms. HIRONO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you again.

I am sure, at least if the way things normally happen in Congress happen again in regard to this issue, we will have a discussion about resources to the FAA budget, money, allocations.

Is what we are talking about here in this discussion today, is it related exclusively to management, to personnel, to management

style, practice and operator's manuals and instructions? This is a management issue, not a funding issue, is that accurate?

Mr. PETERS. We are not. Down in the field level, we don't really know the particular budget issues, but I can tel you that for the fleet that I am responsible to manage, from the maintenance aspect, we are severely understaffed.

Mr. MORAN. As a result of that being severely understaffed, is the consequence the one that we are talking about today or this is a totally different topic?

Mr. PETERS. Well, I will be real honest with you. The notice that was put out last week, every issue that I had on my fleet, I had to put it to the back burner.

Prior to that, the aircraft that I am responsible for was basically generating occurrences around the Country, and one of them is in the news today about the 757 windshield crack. All of those investigations, they take resources. I mean they require myself and possibly another inspector to go and investigate those occurrence or incidents that happen throughout the Country.

We have got our surveillance, our regular surveillance duties that we are required to do along with managing the certificate. So if we are just reacting to the fires, we can't assure the air carrier or the flying public that—I don't want to say that they are safe because, of course, they have a process in place that is designed to keep them safe, and it is not getting the intention that we need due to the lack of resources that our surveillance and investigations require.

Mr. MORAN. So volume and staffing levels are an issue.

Mr. PETERS. I would say they are. I couldn't say truthfully that they are not.

Mr. MORAN. But the circumstances that we are exploring with you here today, they have occurred not as a result of lack of money but a lack of management. Is that fair?

Mr. PETERS. I think so.

Mr. MORAN. Anyone disagree with that?

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I would call it a failure of management, not a lack of management.

Mr. MORAN. You are a more precise wordsmith than I, and I agree with your choice of words.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Hall.

Mr. HALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Forgive me, Mr. Naccache, if this is a repeat of a question you have already been asked, but can you describe the type and level of harassment that was inflicted on Mr. Boutris and Mr. Peters for reporting things they thought were problems that needed to be reported?

Mr. NACCACHE. The description is it was very intense.

Mr. HALL. I will just try to keep this brief and little more general. We hear testimony about national security issues relating to aviation, and it seems that the FAA is trying to encourage and we are all trying to encourage a culture or an atmosphere that would lead people to report problems that they see when it comes to national security, i.e., terrorism.