

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.

I am just curious why we don't have the same emphasis regarding reports of safety problems like, for instance, skin fatigue and cracks that could have resulted in the sudden fracture and failure of the skin panels of the fuselage, consequently causing a rapid decompression which would have a catastrophic impact during flight. That is a physical threat to the physical security to the passengers and the crew.

It seems to me that everyone, the FAA, certainly the airlines and the industry, ought to be at least as concerned about this as they are about on time arrivals or food service. What is more important to your image as a company and what is really more important to the agency, to the FAA, in terms of their charge?

I am just curious what and maybe, Mr. Lambert, you would like to take a stab at this. Has this changed at all? What can we do to change it in terms of encouraging, not punishing, the reporting of problems that may actually be threats to safety of passengers and crew?

Mr. LAMBERT. Well, I think we have systems in place for that, maybe not adequate, but the systems we have in place don't take into effect a manager or supervisor that totally decided not to comply with the rules the FAA has provided in the authority they are given. I don't know that we have anything that can fix that right now.

Mr. HALL. Mr. Naccache, do you care to?

Mr. NACCACHE. Yes, I do agree with him.

And I remember concerning Mr. Boutris and Peters I sent an e-mail—let me see just a second here—on April 19 to all the supervisors. I was then Acting Manager. I sent an e-mail on April 19, directing them to do their part in reducing tension in any perceived adverse action concerning Mr. Boutris who was the subject of a recent anonymous letter.

He could not have a private phone conversation without everything said being repeated around the office, and Mr. Boutris was to come to my office often and complaining. So I directed the supervisors that day the directive to make sure that they were sharing this information with their employees and to try to stop that.

Then I had some other information that Doug Peters was to come and let me know that some of the inspectors always gave him dirty looks, rudeness towards them. They were also badmouthing them to the carrier.

Mr. Boutris was also put as a persona non grata in all maintenance meetings, which I was kind of shocked, and I discussed it with Mr. Gawadzinski. Apparently, Mr. Boutris informed me that day that one of his peers, Mr. Crabtree, requested that he not be present at any of the maintenance personnel meetings since he was shown that he had this letter, anonymous letter against him. They didn't want him around to participate in any of the personnel meetings.

Mr. HALL. Well, thank you, sir.

My time has just expired, and I just wanted to comment that on the passenger side I have seen signs in airports telling the public if you see something, say something. I have seen the same signs in New York City subways, by the way. We are, on one hand, trying to tell the customers and the passengers to speak up if you see

something wrong, but when our inspectors, when they try to do the same thing, they are harassed and, in effect, told to be quiet or removed from their positions.

I, and I assume other Members of this Committee, will be working to make sure that the FAA helps guide the airlines and themselves in the direction of encouraging openness and honesty in the interest of safety and the security and airworthiness of the planes.

With that, I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I thank the gentleman.

Chairman Costello.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I could ask a lot of questions. I think we could probably keep this panel here for another few hours. I am anxious to get to the next panel actually, but let me make a couple of comments.

One is a follow-up to my friend from Kansas, Mr. Moran, who asked the question, is this a matter of funding or is it a management personnel issue.

I would just like for the record for people to understand that numerous times when the Administration and representatives, both the Administrator and others representing the FAA have testified before the Aviation Subcommittee, we have asked that question: Do you have adequate numbers? Do you have adequate inspectors in order to do the job or do you need more?

The answer has always been we could always use more, but we have adequate numbers.

I have said, if you need more, tell us, and we will attempt to provide the funding so that you can hire more inspectors.

They have never come back, to my knowledge, with a number, certainly not to me and certainly not to this Committee.

So I want to make that very clear, that it is not a matter of the Administration or the FAA requesting additional inspectors. We have asked that question. They have said, we have adequate numbers.

Number two is that I think it is worth noting that in the reauthorization bill that we passed on September 20th in the House, that we have historical levels in the reauthorization bill to accomplish a number of things including hiring additional inspectors because it is our belief and certainly my belief that we need to hire additional inspectors.

I wanted to make both of those points on the record so that they were not missed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. DeFazio.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I don't want to keep the panel. I mean they have been very generous with their time, but I wanted to go back again to Mr. Boutris' testimony.

I think the question is, at least among us—we may hear differently from some of the Administration witnesses—there is a larger problem than one rogue guy, and the question becomes how do we deal with this more systemically.

I guess one of the proposals is to have a hot line, and I thought Mr. Boutris' criticism of that was pretty well taken. I would like him to comment, and others, where you say if management doesn't