

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

respond when I openly and on the record raise serious safety concerns, how is a hot line going to work?

I guess the answer is they say, well, you go higher up in the agency. But then you go on to say, well, basically, I had a similar hot line system in place that inspectors do not trust because hot line complaints on safety issues end up on the FAA Administrator's desk.

Then they are passed down to the local regional office. The local regional office assigns FAA security who doesn't have technical expertise, and then the technical portion is reassigned to regional people who might be part of the problem to report on. In the end, not much happens.

Can anybody else? Mr. Boutris, do you want to expand on that at all and anybody else who wants to comment on problems with the existing hot line?

Because if the idea, if the solution is to establish yet another hot line, it sounds like this is a problem that needs to be addressed and maybe it needs to be somewhere outside of political appointees like the Administrator and other folks. Maybe there needs to be a whole—I don't know. Could you address that?

Mr. BOUTRIS. Well, sir, I stand behind what I say there. If we already have one system and inspectors like myself don't trust it, why burden the taxpayers on another system, no matter what you call it?

Like you stated, what I have in my testimony, I openly and on record, for years now, I have been raising safety concerns, and I got nobody's attention. How is the system going to work? I do not know.

But to me, what I want to state here is accountability and like I stated there, I will state it again, there is no accountability throughout the ranks in the FAA.

Case in point, I have the new generation 737s. This fleet that was affected was not my fleet. The partial program manager that is the inspector for that fleet also was fully aware of the unsafe conditions seven days before I did, the same time that Mr. Gawadzinski was aware. So we cannot just hold Mr. Gawadzinski responsible.

That inspector was in charge for that fleet, and he had knowledge at the same time that Mr. Gawadzinski had. He should have raised the flag, followed Title 49, followed our handbook on our responsibility which states: An inspector, who becomes aware of an unsafe condition on an aircraft that has been operating or about to be operated, must take immediate action.

Did that inspector take that action? I don't think so.

Why should that be seven days later?

Mr. DEFAZIO. Where is that inspector now?

Mr. BOUTRIS. I am sorry, sir.

Mr. DEFAZIO. That inspector?

Mr. BOUTRIS. That inspector is Mr. Collamore, and what really I don't understand was after they removed Mr. Gawadzinski, the new manager that took Mr. Mills' place promoted him in Acting Supervisor/Principal Maintenance Inspector.

I wrote to Mr. Stuckey, e-mail after e-mail. You are rewarding inspectors that look the other way, and I have a problem with that because the safety concerns I raised, they were seven

days later. Had this inspector done what I did, the airplanes wouldn't be flying for seven days because Mr. Mills would have grounded them.

So, to answer your concern, I think we need to start with accountability.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Okay. Anybody?

Yes, Mr. Peters.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. DeFazio, I know it might seem like harsh words when I said that the management personnel with the responsibility and authority have proved themselves unworthy to be custodians of the public trust. That is my, that is coming from my heart. I really don't.

Mr. DEFAZIO. You can see you feel very deeply about this.

Mr. PETERS. Well, it is sad. It is sad that it has come to this, but it has, and we have to face reality. That is why Mr. Boutris and I were so persistent in getting the information forward to the Committee so that we can take appropriate action.

If you are asking us what the appropriate action might be, I don't think the FAA can be trusted to police itself in regards to this matter that you spoke about, with a hot line, I don't see how that would help.

An external organization, I don't know what you would call it. Maybe we have an organization in place that could do that. Maybe give them more authority to come in and inspect what do, where we would have to provide evidential proof this is how we determined and this is how we got to where we are at in our inspections.

Mr. DEFAZIO. That is something to think about, Mr. Chairman. I liked your earlier idea on a legislative fix, but I think that is someone who would not be in that political chain of command and would be more responsive perhaps to these concerns.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I think that is a very important line of consideration and one that we will have to explore. To address this issue takes more than one fix. It is going to take maybe a series of actions that will result in a change in the culture of the FAA.

This lingering question about manpower, workforce and ATOS, I just go back to 1986, following the hearing our Subcommittee held on Galaxy Airlines. Here is this so-called airline. It had one flying Electra and two Hangar Queens from which parts were scavenged to supply the flying aircraft.

When we uncovered all the wrongdoing behind the scenes of the management of that so-called airline, FAA rushed in half a dozen inspectors to oversee Galaxy, leaving a major air carrier in the Southwest FSDO with only a skeletal maintenance oversight crew of FAA inspectors.

They were, in effect, making the FAA the maintenance provider for this scummy airline, and I say that with deliberate intention. I know, well, I won't go into the disreputable operation of that carrier.

So I went then to my good friend, Mr. Mineta, who was Chair of the Aviation Authorizing Subcommittee and said, when the appropriation bill comes to the House floor, I want you to join with me in offering an amendment to increase funding for the inspector workforce of FAA. He did. We offered an amendment to provide an