



MEMORANDUM

TO: Government Affairs Committee

FROM: ACI-NA Government Affairs

DATE: February 11, 2009

SUBJECT: House Aviation Subcommittee Hearing on US Airways Flight 1549 :
Mark Reis, Managing Director of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on
behalf of ACI-NA Testifies

GA MEMO: 2009-20

Earlier today, the House Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing on US Airways Flight 1549 and wildlife strikes. Mark Reis, Managing Director of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport testified on behalf of ACI-NA on the second panel.

Opening Statements

Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Costello (D-IL) stated that “there is no question that the skill, experience and training of this crew saved lives.” He continued by saying, “I have been very concerned about the effect of retirements on our air traffic controller workforce as well, and this is a topic that is a major part of our legislation to reauthorize the FAA. We must maintain a focus on safety as the industry adjusts to challenging economic times, and keeping experienced personnel in place and emphasizing rigorous training are important parts of this process.” Costello also mentioned that he looked forward to hearing from Mark Reis about the avian radar system the is being used at SEA-TAC.

Witnesses

PANEL I

- [Captain Chesley B. Sullenberger, III, US Airways, Inc.](#)
- [First Officer Jeffrey B. Skiles, US Airways, Inc.](#)
- Flight Attendant Sheila Dail, US Airways, Inc.- no statement

- Flight Attendant Donna Dent, US Airways, Inc.- no statement
- Flight Attendant Doreen Welsh, US Airways, Inc.- no statement
- [Mr. Patrick F. Harten, Air Traffic Control Specialist, New York Terminal Radar Approach Control](#)

PANEL II

- [The Honorable Robert L Sumwalt, III, Member National Transportation Safety Board](#)
- [Ms. Margaret Gilligan, Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety, FAA](#)
- [Captain John Carey, Chairman, Accident and Investigation Committee, US Airline Pilots Association \(USAPA\)](#)
- [Ms. Candace K. Kolander, Coordinator, Air Safety, Health and Security, Association of Flight Attendants- CWA, AFL-CIO](#)
- [Captain John Prater, President, Air Line Pilots Association, International](#)
- Mr. Mark Reis, Managing Director, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Board Member, Airports Council International-North America (attached)
- [Mr. John E. Ostrom, Chairman, Bird Strike Committee-USA, Manager, Airside Operations, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport](#)

Panel I Questions

Subcommittee Chairman Costello asked the crew to recount the incident from each of their perspectives.

Congressman John Hall (D-NY) asked Captain Sullenberger whether all of aircraft are required to have lifejackets and rafts available in case of a water landing. Captain Sullenberger responded that some aircraft rely on the seat cushions as the only floatation device for its passengers. He added that it would have been a challenge to get everyone off the aircraft had they had to rely on the seat cushions.

Congressman Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) asked Captain Sullenberger about any recommendations he may have regarding how to better prevent bird strikes from causing plane crashes. Captain Sullenberger responded that he thought the FAA should look at the engine manufacturers' standards, and consider revising the regulations based on what the NTSB may find when they conclude their investigation.

Congressman Michael McMahon (D-NY) asked Captain Sullenberger whether the aviation industry is continuing to recruit well-trained, experienced pilots. Captain Sullenberger responded that the industry is at a critical point- and has been unable to recruit the number of experienced pilots that are needed.

Congressman John Duncan (R-TN) asked the panel why bird number of bird strikes had increased and if airports were doing enough to prevent bird strikes. First Officer Skiles explained how he had recently toured Dane County Regional Airport. He explained that

“reporting requirements for bird strikes have increased in recent years” while also talking about how “airports are hamstrung by environmental regulations.” First Officer Skiles also went on to talk about the unique ways airports deal with individual bird species.

Panel II Questions

Chairman Costello asked Mr. Reis about the avian radar technology being used at SEA-TAC. Mr. Reis explained that the technology is being used to track birds and their migratory patterns. He also said that it would be a number of years before SEA-TAC, the FAA, and other airports would be able to use this type of radar on a larger scale.

Congressman Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) asked Mr. Reis whether the system in place for detecting birds works. Mr. Reis explained that the system is working to detect birds, but that there is currently too much data. He went on to say that SEA-TAC is learning about bird population habits from the radar, which is helping to allow SEA-TAC to better design their wildlife management plan.

Please contact ACI-NA’s Government Affairs staff should you have any additional questions or concerns.