

STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION  
HEARING ON  
THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD'S MOST WANTED AVIATION SAFETY  
IMPROVEMENTS  
JUNE 6, 2007

- I want to welcome everyone to this hearing on the *National Transportation Safety Board's Most Wanted Aviation Safety Improvements*.
  
- I have said time and again that although the United States has the safest air transportation system in the world, we cannot rely on or be satisfied with our past success. We must continue to strive for greater success, because one accident or near accident is one too many.
  
- The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has been investigating accidents and proposing remedies to avoid them

since it was founded in 1967. With an overall recommendation acceptance rate of approximately 82 percent by the FAA, important changes and procedures have been made to improve the safety of the traveling public.

- Since 1990, the NTSB has kept a Most Wanted List, representing the most serious problems facing the transportation industry. There continues to be significant challenges in aviation safety.
  
- The NTSB's Most Wanted List has six issue areas for aviation – five of which received an “unacceptable response.” I am not impressed by this statistic, and remain disappointed and concerned that many of these issue areas have been on the list for five, ten or even 15+ years.

- For example, runway incursions has been on the Most Wanted List since it began in 1990. While new technologies have come online and are slowly being deployed to our airports, serious incursions continue to occur.
  
- An incident as recently as January 5, 2007 at Denver International Airport, where the NTSB states that two airplanes missed colliding by about 50 feet, remind us of the importance of runway safety.
  
- Further, both the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Department of Transportation Inspector General's Office (IG) have also highlighted runway incursions as a safety concern; yet, this issue still remains on the Most Wanted List.

- I am interested in hearing from both the NTSB and the FAA why these six issue areas remain on the Most Wanted List; what, if any, progress is being made; and when we can expect to see significant improvement in these issue areas.
  
- I am also interested in hearing more about fatigue. Fatigue is an issue that affects all modes of transportation. Aviation is a 24 hour 7 day a week business, with demanding work schedules. We must do more to ensure that all aviation safety professionals are adequately rested and are alert to perform their duties.
  
- Finally, I would like to point out that Gail Dunham, executive director of the National Disaster Alliance/Foundation, is with us today. She represents family members that have lost

loved ones in aviation accidents. Gail and her group know firsthand the pain that results when our aviation system is not performing at the highest level of safety possible. She reminds us all that we must demand the highest standards of aviation safety.

➤ We must work together to ensure that we continue asking the tough questions and issue the even tougher and sometimes costly rules to guarantee the highest level of safety for the traveling public. With that, I want to again welcome our witnesses today and I look forward to their testimony.

➤ **Before I recognize Mr. Petri for his opening statement, I ask unanimous consent to allow 2 weeks for all Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and**

materials by Members and witnesses. Without objection, so ordered.