OPENING STATEMENT
THE HONORABLE JAMES L. OBERSTAR
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
AVIATION SECURITY: AN UPDATE
JULY 24, 2008

I want to thank Chairman Costello and Ranking Member Petri for holding this hearing on aviation security.

In the 1970s, aviation security focused on how to stop the proliferation of domestic hijackings. In 1972, in response to the rise in the number of hijackings, FAA ordered metal detector searches of passengers and X-rays of carry on bags. In 1974, the Congress imposed these requirements legislatively with the passage of the Anti-Hijacking Act of 1974.

As the United States government installed metal detectors to find guns and other weapons, the aviation security threat changed when a terrorist bomb tore apart Pan American World Airways flight 103, killing all 259 passengers and crew, and 11 residents of the small town of Lockerbie, Scotland. This terrorist act propelled the families of those victims on a mission to prevent future tragedies, culminating in the creation of the President's Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism, in which I served as a Commissioner.

In the Commission's 1990 Report, we found the nation's civilian aviation security system to be seriously flawed, and made 64 recommendations to correct those flaws, which culminated in the passage of the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990. In addition, spurred by initial concerns that a terrorist act was responsible for the TWA 800 explosion, President Clinton organized another commission, the 1996 White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, which made 31 recommendations for enhancing aviation security. Again, Congress acted swiftly and, in the 1996 FAA Reauthorization Act, included measures to heighten security.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, in which 4 aircraft were hijacked and then simultaneously used as weapons of destruction against the United States, the entire state of security for domestic and international commercial air service changed forever.

The universe to be protected is enormous and growing – in the United States alone, 769 million passenger enplanements annually, expected to grow to over 1 billion by 2016, with several hundred million bags to screen. Likewise, the magnitude of the threat is growing and changing.

The *Aviation and Transportation Security Act* made significant changes to aviation security policy, federalizing the screening workforce and requiring 100 percent screening of carry-on and checked baggage. The *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004* required the newly created Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Transportation to work jointly on a comprehensive strategy on aviation security.

We have made great strides in aviation security. However, I have long expressed my concern about reports that although the TSA is deploying technology there is still no complete long-term strategy for integrating that equipment into a seamless security system. I look forward to hearing from the Government Accountability Office on TSA's progress in developing and deploying checkpoint technologies, screening 100 percent of cargo on passenger aircraft, incorporating key stakeholders into coordinating activities and the implementation of Secure Flight. I commend the TSA for launching the new Checkpoint Evolution and appreciate the holistic approach to the checkpoint area this program represents. The TSA must take a comprehensive approach towards all of its security responsibilities to ensure that all areas of vulnerability are addressed.

With the appropriate counter-intelligence efforts and security implemented to the fullest extent, our citizens will forever enjoy the freedom of travel that only this

great nation can provide. I look forward to hearing the testimony of the witnesses today.