

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND
SECURITY

Testimony of Stephen A. Alterman
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Good Morning. My name is Steve Alterman and I am the President of the Cargo Airline Association, the nationwide organization representing the interests of the all-cargo segment of the aviation community.¹ I also have the honor of currently serving as the Chairman of the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC), the federal committee established by Congress to advise the TSA Administrator on issues relating to all areas of aviation security. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

The all-cargo carriers, and the customers and airports they serve, are a unique portion of the aviation marketplace. Our member carriers have annual revenues over \$100 billion and employ upwards of one million workers worldwide.² Customers depend on our services to transport high value, time sensitive, products such as medical devices and perishables, computers and other electronics, and automobile parts. In calendar year 2015, all-cargo carriers operated 89.2% of domestic revenue ton miles (RTMs) and 71.8% of international RTMs.³

In operating these services, the safety and security of our cargo, our facilities and aircraft, and our employees are of utmost importance. It is simply bad policy, and bad business, not to take these issues seriously. In the area of security, we strongly believe that the best security is achieved when government and industry work together to identify vulnerabilities and design and implement mitigation

¹ Association members include direct air carriers: ABX Air, Atlas Air, Federal Express Corporation, Kalitta Air and United Parcel Service Co., as well as Associate Members: Amazon, DHL Express, Memphis International Airport, Louisville International Airport, Ft. Wayne International Airport, John Glenn Columbus International Airport, Spokane International Airport and the Alaska International Airport System.

² Survey of Association members.

³ *FAA Aerospace Forecast, 2016-2036*, March 2016.

strategies. Over the past few years, TSA has also moved in this direction and we look forward to working with the Agency as the outcome-based model of regulation matures.

In terms of current challenges, probably the most pressing need for the all-cargo carriers as business and cargo screening requirements expand is an ability to use third-party canines as a primary means of screening. The technology to screen freight in a manner consistent with the operational needs of the industry simply does not today exist. However, the use of canines can fill this gap. Since there are not enough canines owned by the TSA to accomplish this objective, we continue to urge TSA to establish a program whereby TSA would certify and audit vendors and their dogs who could then provide the canines to air carriers who choose to use them (at the carriers' expense). TSA has taken the first steps in this direction, but the bureaucracy moves slowly and our needs are becoming more urgent. We would therefore recommend that Congress "encourage" TSA to move the third-party canine program along as quickly as possible and to provide the funding necessary to make this project a success. The establishment of this type of canine program for primary screening is consistent with the recommendations of the ASAC that has, on several occasions, urged TSA to move forward with the program.

The third-party canine program is only one of many initiatives studied by ASAC over the past several years. By way of history, while ASAC has existed since 1989, it was finally established as a permanent advisory committee when Congress enacted the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act in 2014⁴. At that time, Congress also exempted ASAC from the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), an exemption that has allowed committee members to discuss the details of security issues without the fear of public disclosure of sensitive information. ASAC membership is diverse with representatives from virtually every sector of the aviation community, as well as user and accident victims groups, and the Committee is supported by an array of subcommittees and *ad hoc* working groups that study specific issues that are either self-generated, requested by TSA, or sometimes required by Congress.

At the present time, major initiatives include work by our new Security Technology Subcommittee to prepare a report on the Checkpoint of the Future that will be presented to TSA this spring, and a continuation of the efforts by our Working Group on Airport Employee Screening to monitor TSA implementation of 28 recommendations designed to combat insider threats by tightening employee screening practices.

Over the past few years, ASAC activity has expanded rapidly, with at least four full committee meetings each year and subcommittee meetings taking place between the full ASAC sessions. The communication between TSA and ASAC is constant and, while ASAC and TSA may not always agree on the way forward, I

⁴ <https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/aviation-security>

believe that both TSA and the Committee have developed a mutual respect for each other that has been extremely helpful in enhancing aviation security while at the same time recognizing the need to keep people and freight moving.⁵

Finally, I would like to offer one suggestion for Congressional action in this session. In my opinion, one of the major impediments to positive change within TSA is instability at the top of the organization. In the last three years, there have been two Administrators and three Acting Administrators. When a new Administrator is nominated and confirmed, he or she will be the sixth head of the Agency in the last three years.

To provide stability, and to allow the Administrator the time to implement changes that may be necessary, the TSA Administrator should be given a fixed five-year term similar to that currently held by the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. Such an action would go a long way to providing the stability needed to accomplish the very important objectives of the Agency.

Thank you very much. I would be happy to answer any questions.

⁵ It should be remembered that ASAC is an advisory, not an oversight, body and our only function is to provide advice to the Administrator. It is wholly up to TSA to decide exactly how to respond to the recommendations presented.