

**STATEMENT OF GINGER EVANS**  
**COMMISSIONER, CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF AVIATION**  
**TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND SECURITY**  
**COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE & TRANSPORTATION**  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
**MAY 4, 2017**

Good morning.

Thank you, Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Cantwell and members of the Committee for asking me to be here today to testify on the important issue of safety at our airports.

I think we can all agree that the events that took place on the night of Sunday, April 9, 2017 were completely unacceptable. And, on behalf of the Chicago Department of Aviation, I want to offer Dr. Dao and his family my sincerest apology.

As someone who has spent more than three decades in the aviation industry, that a passenger at one of our airports was injured in this way is deeply saddening and personally offensive. This is not how we do business and these actions will not be tolerated.

As the Commissioner of Chicago's Department of Aviation, overseeing both O'Hare and Midway International Airports, the safety and well-being of the flying public is and has always been our highest priority. It is imperative that our employees interact with passengers in a manner that not only protects their safety but also conveys dignity and respect.

In Chicago, home to two of the country's biggest airports and one of the world's busiest airports, we take security and safety very seriously. Furthermore, managing these large and complex operations in the current global environment demands the highest safety standards.

We have strong security plans in place, coordinated with our partners in the Federal government. These plans establish roles and responsibilities for a multi-layered security response system that engages Federal Officers, including the Transportation Security Administration, Federal Air Marshals, Customs and Border Patrol, and the FBI, Chicago Police Officers and aviation security officers to respond to different levels of concerns and issues.

This system works together to prevent terrorist threats and breaches of security, while ensuring continued confiscation of weapons, explosives detection and general security for persons working in and travelling through our airports.

These plans help ensure that more than a hundred million passengers safely travel through O'Hare International Airport and Midway International Airport each year. We continue to adapt our safety and security policies, procedures and practices in order to respond to new and changing threats, both external and internal.

However, based on my review, the security officers involved in the incident on United flight 3411 broke from our standard operating procedure and failed to provide Dr. Dao and his family with the respect we demand be given to all of the traveling public flying in and out of Chicago. These actions are not condoned by the Chicago Department of Aviation.

To address what occurred, we initiated an immediate administrative review for the purpose of determining if there was sufficient reason to place the officers on leave. One of the officers was placed on leave April 10, two others were placed on leave April 12, and a supervisor was placed on leave on April 18th. The interviews and findings of our administrative review were given to the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG). The details of the communication and actions during the response to the request for officers are now the subject of an expedited disciplinary investigation by the City of Chicago's Officer of Inspector General (IGO).

Our immediate review showed that the actions of these officers were not in accordance with the Chicago Department of Aviation's standard operating procedures. Our policies are clear that force should only be used when absolutely necessary to protect the security and safety of our passengers. Our policy states that "the safety of innocent persons and bystanders must be given primary consideration whenever the use of force is contemplated."

Further, my department launched an additional review of our security resources and policies to identify changes that might clarify and strengthen security roles and procedures to ensure nothing like this happens again. In addition, we have provided requested documents and communications to the public and press to ensure full transparency about these events.

While we cannot reverse what took place, as a department we are taking action to ensure this never happens again. We have moved quickly to institute several changes in our policies, procedures and training programs that I would like to share with you today.

- 1.) Following this incident, it has become clear, and all stakeholders agree, that neither the Chicago Police Department nor airport security officers should be called to aircraft to deal with any customer service matters including overbooking situations. United Airlines announced that effective April 12, that they would call airport security and CPD only for issues involving safety and security. We are working with other airlines to standardize this policy to ensure consistency.
- 2.) Effective April 10, Chicago Department of Aviation Airport Security Officers will no longer board aircraft, unless there is an immediate medical issue or imminent physical threat on board.

The Chicago Police Department will continue to take the lead in responding to disturbances on aircraft, while the main duty of airport security officers (ASOs) will continue to be to enforce federal regulations governing airport safety and security in restricted areas of the airport. While ASOs are specifically trained on airfield perimeter patrol and aircraft movement areas, they are not the designated law enforcement authority at our airports.

We've also made changes internally regarding how calls are dispatched through the O'Hare Communications Center to ensure that, as stated above, Chicago Police Department officers will be the lead responders for disturbances onboard aircraft.

- 3.) We are in the final stage of obtaining an international aviation security expert to partner with us to conduct a comprehensive review of our security program – including policies, procedures, staff functions, facilities and technology – to ensure that we are not only meeting current best practices but also thinking forward and positioning ourselves to respond to the ever-changing security environment.

This thorough review will give us an outside perspective on our policies and practices that will help us improve and better-serve our passengers.

While these steps representative an important step forward, more work remains to be done. We will continue to assess both our staff and our facilities to meet our most important mission of safely supporting each and every passenger that moves through our airports.

In closing, I'd like to state once again that we are deeply sorry for the events that took place on April 9.

We will continue to strengthen our security systems and policies to ensure they work together to keep all of our passengers safe.

We are re-doubling our efforts to strengthen our policies, procedures and training programs, and to learn from this incident and ensure that something like this never happens again.

As we move forward, we will take action based on the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General's review, and we will release our own report with further findings and policy actions.

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