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REPORT TO THE CONGRESS



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Airport Safety Inspection Program Needed To Improve Flight Safety Of Civil Aircraft B-164497 (1)

Federal Aviation Administration
Department of Transportation

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

JAN. 15, 1971

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-164497(1)

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This is our report on the need for an airport safety inspection program to improve flight safety of civil aircraft by the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation.

The review was made pursuant to the Budget and Accounting Act, 1921 (31 U.S.C. 53), and the Accounting and Auditing Act of 1950 (31 U.S.C. 67).

Copies of this report are being sent to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of Transportation; and the Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration.

James B. Steets

Comptroller General
of the United States

C o n t e n t s

	<u>Page</u>
DIGEST	1
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 AIRPORT SAFETY INSPECTION PROGRAM NEEDED TO IMPROVE FLIGHT SAFETY OF CIVIL AIRCRAFT	6
Airport inspection programs	7
Evaluation of selected inspection programs	9
Test airport safety inspection pro- gram	13
Procedures to promote safety at air- ports	14
3 AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION	19
4 SCOPE OF REVIEW	20
APPENDIX	
I Letter dated June 11, 1970, from the Depart- ment of Transportation to the General Accounting Office	23
II Principal officials of the Department of Transportation responsible for the activities discussed in this report	25

ABBREVIATIONS

FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAAP	Federal-aid to Airports Program
GAO	General Accounting Office

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

The Federal Aviation Administration (Agency) is required by law to promote flight safety of civil aircraft in the United States by prescribing reasonable rules and regulations or minimum safety standards. Airmen, aircraft, and public airports are equally important elements in what is commonly referred to as the national aviation system.

The Agency has established minimum mandatory safety standards and has conducted programs to ensure that these standards are met by airmen, aircraft, and other related activities.

Although the Agency has had general authority since 1958 to perform similar functions regarding air carrier airports that serve commercial passenger and cargo air carriers certificated by the Civil Aeronautics Board and general aviation airports which ordinarily serve only private and small commercial aircraft, it had not established minimum mandatory safety standards nor comprehensive safety programs for these airports.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) made the review to determine whether the Federal Aviation Administration could fully carry out its responsibility to promote flight safety at both air carrier and general aviation airports without exercising the degree of control over airports that it does over airmen and aircraft.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although conditions at airports may seriously influence flight safety, the Agency did not have a program specifically designed to evaluate the safety of public airports. It relied on airport inspections under other programs which do not have safety as a primary objective. These programs neither singly nor collectively provided the data required for determining safety of an airport. (See pp. 9 to 12.)

In 1967, the Agency conducted a test safety inspection program at 32 public airports and found conditions that could cause accidents. Some of these conditions were previously unknown to the Agency and to airport management. An Agency official said that this program had been discontinued because employee ceilings established by the Department of Transportation had not permitted the Agency to obtain the necessary additional manpower. (See p. 13.)

GAO's conclusion is that an airport safety inspection program is needed so that the Agency can better fulfill its responsibility of ensuring the flight safety of aircraft at both air carrier and general aviation airports.

Before GAO finished its review, the Congress considered a bill requiring the Agency to develop and enforce minimum mandatory safety standards for air carrier airports and to certificate airports meeting such standards. In March 1970, GAO furnished its findings to the congressional committees considering the proposed legislation.

In May 1970, the Congress passed the Airport and Airway Development Act requiring the Agency to establish minimum mandatory safety standards for operation of air carrier airports and to certificate each airport meeting the standards. The act does not require the agency to establish and enforce similar standards for general aviation airports. However, the Agency retains the authority to inspect and set standards for these airports under previous legislation. (See p. 16.)

RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

GAO suggested in February 1970 that the Secretary of Transportation have the Federal Aviation Administrator implement a safety inspection program for air carrier and general aviation airports. (See p. 19.)

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The Department agreed to implement GAO's suggestions with respect to air carrier airports as part of the Agency's overall implementation of the Airport and Airway Development Act. In addition, the Department has said that it plans to survey general aviation airports and implement safety standards as needed. (See p. 19.) GAO believes that these actions, if effectively implemented and sustained, will improve flight safety of civil aircraft.

GAO plans to examine the results of these programs to determine whether they eliminate the problems discussed in this report.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

This report is being issued to inform the Congress of the progress being made in implementing recently enacted legislation requiring the certification of air carrier airports and the Agency's plans with regard to applying safety standards to general aviation airports.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The General Accounting Office has reviewed the policies and practices of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) relative to the inspection of public airports in the United States. Our review, which was undertaken as part of our continuing examination into FAA programs, was directed toward examining into the nature of FAA's control and inspection of public airports through existing programs administered by the FAA's Airports Service and Flight Standards Service. We did not make an overall evaluation of the existing programs nor did we make any determinations as to the safety of public airports in the United States. The scope of our review is discussed on page 20.

One of the primary missions of FAA, as established by the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, is the maintenance of civil aeronautics safety. The Federal Aviation Administrator is required by section 601 of the act (49 U.S.C. 1421) to promote the safety of flight of civil aircraft in air commerce by prescribing reasonable rules and regulations or minimum safety standards.

The Administrator is empowered by the act to issue certificates which attest to the (1) airworthiness of aircraft, (2) competence of airmen, and (3) adequacy of other related activities such as air carrier operations, repair stations, air navigation facilities, and flight training schools.

With regard to air navigation facilities, section 606 of the act provides:

"The Administrator is empowered to inspect, classify, and rate any air navigation facility available for the use of civil aircraft, as to its suitability for such use. The Administrator is empowered to issue a certificate for any such air navigation facility."

The act defines an air navigation facility as any facility used in, available for use in, or designed for use in, aid of air navigation and includes, among other things, airports.

Airmen, aircraft, and airports are integral parts of the national aviation system. For airmen, aircraft, and other related activities, FAA has established minimum mandatory safety standards and has certification and surveillance programs designed to provide assurance that the safety standards are met by the aviation industry. The provisions of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 gave FAA similar authority regarding airports; but, unlike the other integral parts of the national aviation system, FAA has not deemed it necessary to establish such standards.

FAA's role in the development and operation of public airports has been primarily one of determining the Nation's airport requirements, encouraging airport development, establishing advisory airport standards, and ensuring the availability of information regarding the operational adequacy of public airports by annually surveying airport development, utilization, and operational limitations.

FAA had considered the possibility of broadening its role in the development and operation of public airports. In March 1961, the Administrator was instructed by the President of the United States to develop a statement of national aviation goals. Development of such goals was undertaken by a task force termed "Project Horizon." The Project Horizon report stated that a system of airport classification should be considered.

Under this system, FAA would establish and promulgate safety standards and rate airports according to how well the standards are met. In response to this statement, a proposed national airport evaluation system was developed within FAA and presented to the Administrator in February 1962. The proposed system provided for establishing mandatory airport safety standards and for evaluating and rating airports in accordance with such established standards. In May 1962, the Administrator told airport executives that

he was withholding issuance of mandatory airport standards to see if airports continued their safety improvement trend.

In February 1966, FAA again considered whether the Federal Government should regulate matters affecting the safety of public airports, and decided that justification for such action was lacking. The Airports Service was directed to develop a test inspection program to obtain information on airport safety conditions.

In May 1970, the Congress passed the Airport and Airway Development Act of 1970 (Public Law 258, 91st Cong.) which requires that air carrier airports¹ must have an operating certificate from FAA to continue serving air carriers after May 21, 1972, and air carrier airports not meeting this requirement would be operating in violation of the act.

The act specifically requires that the Administrator establish minimum mandatory safety standards for the operation of air carrier airports serving air carriers certificated by the Civil Aeronautics Board and issue operating certificates to the airports meeting such standards. Although the act did not specifically require FAA to certify general aviation airports,² the language in the Federal Aviation Act, which remains in effect, authorizes the Administrator to conduct airport safety inspection programs for general aviation airports and to prescribe minimum mandatory safety standards as necessary.

The principal officials of the Department of Transportation responsible for the activities discussed in this report are listed in appendix II.

¹ Air carrier airports--Airports that serve commercial passenger and cargo air carriers certificated by the Civil Aeronautics Board. These airports also generally handle private aircraft.

² General aviation airports--All airports not classified as air carrier. Generally these airports only serve private aircraft and small commercial aircraft (under 12,500 pounds).

CHAPTER 2

AIRPORT SAFETY INSPECTION PROGRAM NEEDED

TO IMPROVE FLIGHT SAFETY OF CIVIL AIRCRAFT

FAA did not have an airport inspection program specifically designed to evaluate safety at public airports. We found that, although FAA had several inspection programs that required visits to airports, none of these programs emphasized airport safety to the extent that they provided, either singly or collectively, comprehensive information for determining the safety of an airport facility.

In 1967, FAA conducted a test safety inspection program at 32 public airports and found numerous safety hazards which could cause accidents. Certain of these conditions had been unknown to FAA and to airport management. Although the test safety inspection program identified a need for greater attention toward possible safety hazards at airports, an FAA official informed us that the program had not been continued because employee ceilings established by the Department of Transportation had not permitted FAA to obtain the necessary additional manpower.

FAA had the authority to certificate airports and to set minimum mandatory safety standards for public airports under the Federal Aviation Act of 1958. FAA, however, had exercised this authority only to the extent of establishing advisory airport safety standards. Compliance with these standards was mandatory only for airport facilities constructed through the use of Federal funds. We found that, in many instances, compliance with the advisory standards never became mandatory because facilities eligible for Federal aid were constructed without Federal funds or the facilities covered by the standards were not eligible for Federal funds.

The methods employed by FAA to prevent or eliminate airport safety hazards, in the absence of specific legislation requiring FAA to establish minimum mandatory safety standards for public airports and to certificate those airports meeting such standards, appear to have been relatively ineffective.

AIRPORT INSPECTION PROGRAMS

At the time we initiated our review, FAA was not making systematic and comprehensive airport inspections for the primary purpose of evaluating airport safety. Rather, two Services (Airports and Flight Standards) within FAA had several programs which resulted in visits to airports and, to some extent, were concerned with airport safety.

Following are brief summaries of the more significant inspection programs administered by Airports Service or Flight Standards Service.

Airports Service

Airport Facilities Records Program--The purpose of this program is to obtain, maintain, and disseminate to the aviation community accurate and current information relative to physical facilities, services available, and aviation activities at the airports. This information is obtained primarily through annual inspections of the airports by FAA's field personnel.

Compliance Program--This program provides a basis for determining whether airport sponsors are complying with the provisions of Federal grant agreements which require that the airport be properly maintained and operated. Information is gathered during compliance inspections and/or other inspections made at the airports periodically.

Flight Standards Service

General Aviation Airport Surveillance Program--This program provides for observations of the general safety aspects of the airport, discussions of possible deficiencies with airport personnel, and making note of aviation activities in need of special attention.

Air Carrier Station Facility Inspection Program--Inspections under this program are made to ensure that air carrier facilities continue to be adequate for the type of operations being conducted at the airport.

Air Carrier Certification Program--Airport inspections under this program are made to determine whether the airport is suitable for the planned aircraft operations. These inspections are made only in connection with the issuance of or amendments to a certificate authorizing an air carrier to conduct operations at an airport.

Air Carrier En Route Inspection Program--These inspections are primarily concerned with the competency of a flight crew and the adequacy of the air carrier's operating procedures, equipment, and facilities. These inspections are made by flying with the air carrier thus allowing observation of the airports used.

EVALUATION OF SELECTED INSPECTION PROGRAMS

We reviewed the existing inspection programs to determine whether one or a combination of the programs would suffice as an airport safety inspection program. We found that each program dealt with a different aspect of airports and, in our opinion, the programs neither singly nor collectively provided information on which a comprehensive evaluation of safety could be based.

General airport safety appeared to be the primary objective of only one of the inspection programs--General Aviation Airport Surveillance. However, for the two regional offices included in our review, we found that inspections under this program were not being made on a regularly scheduled basis and that the inspections that had been made were incident to visits to the airports for other reasons.

In our opinion, the most comprehensive program is the Airport Facilities Records Program. The objective of this program, however, is to obtain current information relative to physical facilities, service available, and aviation activities at the airports--not to evaluate airport safety.

FAA apparently relied primarily on two of the existing programs to ensure some degree of airport safety--Airports Service's Compliance Program and Flight Standards' Air Carrier Certification Program. As previously stated, the basic objective of the Airports Compliance Program was to provide a basis for determining whether airport sponsors were complying with Federal grant agreements which require that the airport be properly maintained and operated. We believe that FAA's apparent reliance on this program as a means of ensuring airport safety was not appropriate as demonstrated by the results of FAA's test airport safety inspection program (discussed on p. 17) and by two FAA notices regarding airport safety.

In February 1969, an FAA notice was issued to Airports Service field personnel which pointed out that the first priority objective of the Compliance Program was to ensure and preserve airport safety. This notice stated, in part, that:

"a significant number of public airports have deficiencies which are the result of continuing neglect and failure to meet the terms of the agreements by which they were acquired or developed. Moreover, there is increasing evidence that the deficiencies at these airports continue year after year without a positive effort by the agency to bring about their correction."

In September 1969, another FAA notice was issued to field personnel advising them that a pilot had complained to FAA about obstructions in the runway approaches at three air carrier airports. The notice stated that the obstructions had been previously noted during FAA inspections but that firm efforts had not been made to remove the obstructions. The notice stated also, that a review of available inspection data from one regional office disclosed that 40 air carrier airports had runway approach obstructions which violated FAA criteria. The field personnel were instructed to attempt to obtain corrective action on runway approach deficiencies by (1) declaring airports with deficiencies in noncompliance with Federal grant agreements, (2) giving airport sponsors firm notification to correct the deficient conditions, and (3) taking effective follow-up action to ensure that these conditions are corrected.

During our review, which was in process when the above notices were issued, we found situations similar to those disclosed in the notices. Furthermore, the FAA's Office of Audit, in a report dated January 5, 1970, on the Compliance Program, cast additional doubt on the appropriateness of the Administration's reliance on this program to ensure airport safety. The Office of Audit reviewed, on a random basis, Airport Facility Records reports from four regions for fiscal year 1968 involving 210 airports with Federal grant agreements and found that 111 airports, or 53 percent, had runway approach obstructions which violated FAA criteria. The Office of Audit indicated in its report that these 111 airports may have violated the provisions of Federal grant agreements and that they may not have been classified by FAA as being in a status of noncompliance. The Office of Audit, however, was unable to obtain from FAA officials satisfactory explanations for not placing

airports with cited deficiencies in a status of noncompliance with Federal grant agreements.

With regard to the Flight Standards Air Carrier Certification Program, the Federal Aviation Regulations (part 121.97) require air carriers to show:

"*** that each route it submits for approval has enough airports that are properly equipped and adequate for the proposed operation, considering such items as size, surface, obstructions, facilities, public protection, lighting, navigational and communications aids, and ATC [air traffic control]."

FAA's inspection and subsequent approval of airports under this regulation generally are requested by an air carrier when it plans to initiate service to an airport or when an air carrier plans to start using a new or different type of aircraft at an airport. Approval of airports is not an everyday occurrence and, at the two regional offices included in our review, we found that Flight Standards had not made any inspections of this type in the 3 years preceding our review. We learned, by discussion with Flight Standards' field personnel and a review of their pertinent regulations and procedures, that FAA's approval of airports for air carrier service is based on information obtained from Airports Service, flights into the airport, and an inspection of the airport.

Flight Standards' program undoubtedly contributed to airport safety. The most obvious contribution was the restriction placed on air carrier operations due to airport conditions. For example, an air carrier could be restricted to having only daylight operations at an airport with inadequate lighting, or landing and takeoff restrictions could be placed on air carrier operations if an obstruction existed in the approach to a runway.

We noted, however, that Flight Standards Service did not have a program which was primarily concerned with the continued adequacy of an airport after the airport had been approved for air carrier service. The Flight Standards' programs mentioned previously (air carrier station facility

and en route inspections) required visits to airports and provided information on any obvious airport safety hazards. However, the lack of a program to ensure the continued adequacy of air carrier airports had caused some concern within Flight Standards Service. We noted that a memorandum--dated February 18, 1969, requested by the Director, Flight Standards Service, to provide him with information on inspection and surveillance of air carrier airports--concluded that Airports Service must move ahead with their proposed airport safety inspection program or Flight Standards Service must be staffed to provide for the inspection of air carrier airports.

TEST AIRPORT SAFETY INSPECTION PROGRAM

During calendar year 1967, FAA conducted, on a test basis, safety inspections at 32 public airports to determine the need for a comprehensive airport safety program and improved airport safety standards or guidance. The test program was designed to identify conditions within the airport environment which might cause accidents or incidents; to inform airport managers of unsafe or marginal conditions; to encourage airport management to take corrective action; and to take follow-up action to ensure that unsafe conditions had been corrected, thereby improving airport safety.

We reviewed the inspection reports for the 32 airports included in the test inspection program. The inspections made were concerned with both airport facility and operational aspects. The following table lists the more significant factors affecting airport safety and the number of airports at which deficiencies were reported. In preparing the table, we listed as a deficiency any condition that did not meet FAA's airport advisory standards.

	<u>Number of airports with reported deficiencies</u>
Obstructions and hazards	31
Runway, taxiway, apron, etc.	31
Lighting--runway, taxiway, etc.	28
Passenger and public protection	27
Fire and rescue service	22
Bird hazards	8

FAA's review of the inspection reports showed that a total of 1,026 deficiencies had been found at the airports inspected--some required immediate action and others required long-range action. Some examples of the deficiencies were: approaches to runways were obstructed by trees, open trenches, and mounds of earth in the vicinity of runways; poor and improper runway markings; runways in poor condition; inadequate fire protection for the size of airport; inadequate maintenance of lighting systems; and bird-roosting areas in the airport vicinity.

FAA subsequently concluded in its evaluation of the test safety program that:

1. Conditions which could cause accidents were noted at airports.
2. Some of the conditions noted were previously unknown to FAA and airport management.
3. Airport management and tenants were receptive to and actively participated in the program.

FAA concluded that the program should be continued with inspections of all air carrier airports in depth every other year; inspections of other airports in the National Airport Plan in depth every third year; and follow-up inspections in intervening years. The National Airport Plan lists the airports which are necessary to provide a system of public airports adequate to meet the needs of civil aviation. According to an FAA official, the program was not continued because employee ceilings established by the Department of Transportation were not sufficient to permit the Administrator to obtain the necessary additional manpower.

PROCEDURES TO PROMOTE SAFETY AT AIRPORTS

We found that FAA had developed extensive standards for airport design, construction, and operation. These standards were issued in the form of advisory circulars as part of the FAA's role in the development of a national aviation system. Compliance with these standards became mandatory for a public airport when Federal funds became available for the development of that airport under the Federal-aid to Airports Program (FAAP). However, an airport receiving Federal financial assistance was required to comply only with the standards applicable to the specific airport facility being financed by Federal funds. For example, a runway, financed in part with Federal funds, had to be constructed in accordance with FAA standards. Other runways at the same airport, however, not financed with Federal funds, did not have to be constructed in accordance with these standards.

In some cases, compliance with FAA standards never became mandatory because the equipment covered by the standards was not eligible for Federal financial assistance under FAAP. For example, FAA had issued advisory circulars prescribing the type and amount of fire and rescue equipment needed at an airport depending on its size and complexity. Such equipment, however, was not eligible for Federal assistance under FAAP. A recent Airline Pilots Association study disclosed that 19 airports having jet service had no fire and rescue equipment as of January 1, 1970. The Airline Pilot Association study disclosed also that an additional 127 airports which handled piston and turboprop aircraft had no fire and rescue equipment based at the airport.

Airports Service and Flight Standards Service each have some responsibility to prevent or eliminate airport safety hazards, as evidenced by the inspection programs mentioned previously. The methods available for use by the two Services in carrying out that responsibility varies.

We found that Airports Service relies primarily on persuasion to obtain correction of potential safety hazards. In the event persuasion fails, Airports Service may:

1. Deny Federal participation in the cost of future airport development.
2. Withhold Federal funds under an approved airport grant agreement.

Although Airports Service has used these techniques in the past, the use has been limited by the lack of an adequate airport safety inspection program. (See pp. 10 and 11.)

Furthermore, the above inducement techniques could be used only for those airports which had requested or were planning to request Federal funds. The number of airports within these categories was not readily available to us. However, as of June 30, 1970, about 2,300 of the 7,160 public airports had received Federal funds under FAAP.

With regard to the method available to Flight Standards Service to prevent or eliminate safety hazards, the Federal Aviation Regulations provided that air carriers and other

commercial operators of large aircraft (over 12,500 pounds) could be prohibited from using an airport at which conditions were considered by Flight Standards to be hazardous. Although this method might have been more effective in obtaining corrective action on airport safety hazards than those utilized by Airports Service, Flight Standards Service first had to be aware of any hazardous conditions.

As stated previously, Flight Standards did not have a comprehensive inspection program which continually emphasized the adequacy and safety of airports. In the past, Flight Standards had used its authority to restrict air carrier operations at certain airports with clearly defined safety hazards.

Subsequent to the start of our review, the Congress took under consideration a bill that would amend the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 to require FAA to develop minimum mandatory safety standards for air carrier airports and to certificate airports meeting such standards. In March 1970, we furnished our findings concerning airport safety to the congressional committees considering the proposed amendment.

In May 1970, the Congress passed the Airport and Airway Development Act requiring FAA to establish minimum mandatory safety standards for air carrier airports and to issue an operating certificate by May 21, 1972, to each airport meeting such standards. The act does not require that general aviation airports be certificated although FAA retains the authority to inspect and set standards for these airports under the Federal Aviation Act of 1958.

FAA has instituted a study group comprising officials of Airports Service, Flight Standards Service, and Air Traffic Service which is studying and delineating the requirements placed on FAA for airport certification and planning for the implementation of these requirements. Airports Service will retain ultimate responsibility for the certification program.

The study group, in considering the alternative methods of accomplishing airport certification, has stated that airport safety is dependent upon (1) airport design which is

the responsibility of the Airports Service in cooperation with the airport owner, (2) aircraft operations which are the responsibilities of the Flight Standards Service and the aircraft operators, and (3) proper maintenance and protection of airport facilities which are the responsibility of the airport owner.

The study group believes that the latter effort, which is not monitored by any of FAA's existing inspection programs, should be accomplished under airport certification. Present efforts of the study group are being directed toward establishing standards and inspection procedures to ensure proper maintenance and protection of airport facilities.

The study group has defined minimum mandatory safety standards as levels or conditions of performance below which safety would be questionable. The standards, as envisioned by the study group, would be applicable to facilities, personnel, and activities controlled by airport management and would be such that they could reasonably be complied with.

As of October 1, 1970, FAA's plans were to establish airport standards in 19 separate areas, including pavement, lighting, fire and rescue (equipment, personnel and supplies), emergency plans, self inspection, and obstructions. In August 1970, FAA informed the aviation community of its general plans regarding these standards and subsequently held discussions on the subject with the aviation community. FAA is advocating to the aviation community, the adoption, where appropriate, of existing advisory standards as the basis for airport certification.

The study group plans, as a basic element in the certification process, to require that each airport manager prepare an airport operations manual. The procedures described in this manual will be used by FAA to evaluate how the airport management plans to comply with the minimum mandatory airport safety standards.

FAA expects to complete and issue minimum mandatory airport safety standards and to obtain and train staff necessary to implement the airport certification program by

March 1971. If FAA meets this time limit for issuance of the standards, it expects to be able to complete certification of all air carrier airports by the May 1972 deadline established by the Congress. The study group has not yet defined its plans for enforcing compliance with the standards.

CHAPTER 3

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

Conditions at airports seriously influence the flight safety of civil aircraft. Although FAA had the authority to make airports subject to minimum mandatory safety standards, it had not elected to exercise that authority. Accordingly, FAA should exercise a degree of control over airports similar to that exercised over aircraft and airmen.

We proposed in February 1970 that the Secretary of Transportation have the Administrator of FAA implement an airport safety inspection program that would include both air carrier and general aviation airports. On the basis of information derived from this inspection program, we proposed further that the Administrator (1) determine the controls needed to enable FAA to exercise the same degree of control over airports as that exercised over aircraft and airmen and (2) promulgate appropriate regulations and procedures necessary to establish and implement these controls.

The Department, in commenting on our proposals, has indicated that FAA is in the process of (1) establishing an appropriate airport safety inspection program and (2) developing minimum mandatory safety standards for the operation of air carrier airports in accordance with the Airport and Airway Development Act of 1970. The Department also indicated that it would initiate a program of additional surveillance of general aviation airports. Should this program indicate that minimum mandatory safety standards are necessary, the Department plans to establish such standards.

In our view, the Department's planned actions appear to be consistent with our proposals and the legislation requiring FAA to certify air carrier airports. Because FAA's actions have not been fully implemented, we plan to evaluate, at a later date, the programs FAA is presently implementing to determine whether they are effective in eliminating the problems discussed in this report.

CHAPTER 4

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Our review included an evaluation of existing Airports Service and Flight Standards Service inspection programs to determine their adequacy toward ensuring the safety of flight of civil aircraft at airports.

We examined pertinent laws, regulations, policies, procedures, correspondence, inspection reports, and other related documents. We discussed the matters pertinent to our review with FAA headquarters and regional office officials responsible for the programs reviewed. We conducted our review at the FAA headquarters in Washington, D.C.; regional offices located in Atlanta, Georgia, and Fort Worth, Texas; and selected area offices within each of these regions.

APPENDIXES



ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

June 11, 1970

Mr. Bernard Sacks
Assistant Director
Civil Division
General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Sacks:

This is in reply to your request for our comments on your draft report to the Congress entitled, "Airport Safety Inspection Program Needed to Improve Flight Safety of Civil Aircraft, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)." In the report you conclude that FAA should exercise more control over airports than is presently provided and that this control cannot be accomplished through the agency's existing inspection programs.

You recommend that the Secretary [See GAO note.]

take action to permit the FAA Administrator to implement an airport safety inspection program. You also recommend that based upon information derived from such a program, the FAA Administrator establish controls over airport safety similar to those exercised over aircraft and airmen, and develop appropriate regulations and procedures to implement these controls under the existing enforcement authority available to FAA.

As you know, the Airport and Airway Development Act of 1970, recently passed by the Congress, requires a certification program for airports serving carriers, and clarifies the requirement for certification before an airport may serve air carriers.

Accordingly, we intend to implement the legislation by establishing an appropriate airport safety inspection program and prescribing minimum safety standards for the operation of airports serving air carriers certificated by the Civil Aeronautics Board.

APPENDIX I

Page 2

we will also initiate a program of additional surveillance of general aviation airports. Should this program indicate that minimum mandatory standards are necessary, we will take the steps necessary to institute them.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,



Alan L. Dean

GAO note: Refers to information contained in draft report but deleted in final report.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIVITIES
DISCUSSED IN THIS REPORT

	Tenure of office	
	From	To
<u>DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION</u>		
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION:		
John A. Volpe	Jan. 1969	Present
Alan S. Boyd	Apr. 1967	Dec. 1968
<u>FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION</u>		
ADMINISTRATOR:		
John H. Shaffer	Mar. 1969	Present
David D. Thomas (acting)	Aug. 1968	Mar. 1969
General William F. McKee	July 1965	July 1968
ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR OPERATIONS:		
George S. Moore	Apr. 1967	Present
Arvin O. Basnight	July 1965	Apr. 1967
DIRECTOR, AIRPORTS SERVICE:		
Chester G. Bowers	Jan. 1967	Present
Chester G. Bowers (acting)	Nov. 1966	Jan. 1967
Cole H. Morrow	Nov. 1961	Nov. 1966
DIRECTOR, FLIGHT STANDARDS SERVICE:		
James F. Rudolph	Oct. 1967	Present
James F. Rudolph (acting)	June 1967	Oct. 1967
Clifford W. Walker	Apr. 1966	June 1967
George S. Moore	Apr. 1963	Apr. 1966

