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Department of Transportation Report Substantiates Whistleblower's Safety Concerns at American Airlines Certificate Management Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, DC/November 4, 2010—Today the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) transmitted to the President and Congress reports of the Department of Transportation (DOT) responding to a whistleblower's allegations that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) failed to provide effective oversight of American Airlines and to address the air carrier's non-compliance with inspection and maintenance requirements.

The whistleblower, Mr. Andrew G. Blosser, an FAA Aviation Safety Inspector assigned to the American Airlines Certificate Management Office (CMO), in Fort Worth, Texas, alleged that CMO officials were unwilling or unable to obtain positive corrective actions from the air carrier and that the failure to enforce inspection and maintenance requirements has resulted in a poorly maintained fleet that represents a safety concern for the flying public. Mr. Blosser identified six areas of concern regarding American Airlines' non-compliance: (1) maintenance procedures; (2) minimum equipment list (MEL) deferrals; (3) required inspection items (RII); (4) the repair station training needs assessment (TNA); (5) the Continuing Analysis and Surveillance System (CASS); and (6) the fuel tank system (FTS) maintenance program.

The report and a supplemental report submitted to OSC by Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood substantiated Mr. Blosser's allegations that the CMO failed to ensure that American Airlines complied with requirements in four of the six areas identified above; specifically, maintenance procedures, MEL deferrals, RII requirements, and CASS requirements. The investigation found that at the time of Mr. Blosser's disclosures, CMO Actions to ensure compliance were not effective. In addition, the investigation found that inaccurate and untimely FAA guidance for the review and approval of the air carrier's FTS maintenance program most likely contributed to inspector confusion and uncertainty as to whether the program met federal regulations and airworthiness directive (AD) requirements. ADs are rules that FAA issues to address an unsafe condition that exists in an aircraft product or is likely to exist or develop in other products of the same type design.

In response to the findings, FAA Administrator J. Randolph Babbitt pledged to take corrective action, including improving policies and procedures within the CMO. In addition, FAA removed or reassigned managers and noted that American Airlines replaced several senior level personnel. FAA further indicated that it plans to have an outside office provide oversight

of the CMO to ensure corrective actions are taken. By March 2011, inspectors from outside the region will conduct an independent audit to assess the effectiveness of the corrective actions, and in July 2011, the FAA's Flight Standards Quality Assurance Division will conduct an independent Flight Standards Evaluation Program evaluation of the CMO.

OSC determined that the agency's report contains all of the information required by statute and the findings appear reasonable.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent investigative and prosecutorial agency and operates as a secure channel for disclosures of whistleblower complaints. Its primary mission is to safeguard the merit system in federal employment by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially retaliation for whistleblowing. OSC also has jurisdiction over the Hatch Act. For more information please visit our web site at www.osc.gov or call 1 (800) 872-9855.