Office of the Inspector General
Audit Report

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION · UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Memorandum

Subject: <u>ACTION</u>: Advisory Memorandum on Oversight for Pilot Training Programs Report No. R0-FA-7-004

Date: January 14, 1997

From: Lawrence H. Weintrob
Assistant Inspector General for Auditing

Reply to
Attn. of: JA-1

To: Federal Aviation Administrator

This advisory memorandum presents the results of our audit of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) oversight for pilot training programs operated by air carriers under Part 121 of the Federal Aviation Regulations. The objective of our audit was to determine whether FAA provided effective oversight for pilot training programs.

We evaluated FAA oversight of pilot training programs used by Alaska Airlines, United Airlines, USAir, and JetTrain. United Airlines and USAir each operate about 2,200 flights daily. Alaska Airlines and JetTrain operate about 435 and 10 flights daily, respectively. During the past 5 years, the four airlines did not have any accidents attributed to pilot training.

From November 1995 through August 1996, we performed our audit in FAA Headquarters and the three FAA field offices having oversight responsibility for the four pilot training programs reviewed. The three FAA field offices include the Seattle Flight Standards District Office for Alaska Airlines; the Denver Certificate Management Field Office for United Airlines; and the Pittsburgh Flight Standards District Office for USAir and JetTrain. Also, we concurrently performed our audit in offices and training facilities for the four air carriers.

We conducted our audit in accordance with the <u>Government Auditing Standards</u> prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States. Accordingly, we analyzed FAA policy, regulations, orders, instructions, procedures, records, data, and practices related to oversight of pilot training programs. We also interviewed key FAA and air carrier officials.

We did not assess whether FAA effectively used management information, such as the results of safety inspections included in FAA's Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem, to target inspection resources to the areas of greatest potential risk. We did not make this assessment because recent General Accounting Office and Office of Inspector General audits addressed problems concerning the accuracy and consistency of inspection data included in the Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem. We did, however, review information included in the Program Tracking and Reporting Subsystem to determine whether FAA completed training program inspections required by National Flight Standards Work Program Guidelines and identified problems with pilot training programs.

The three FAA field offices included in our audit provided sufficient oversight for pilot training programs operated by Alaska Airlines, United Airlines, USAir, and JetTrain under Part 121 of the Federal Aviation Regulations. We found FAA inspectors were familiar with and qualified to inspect pilot training programs. Also, the inspectors (i) completed numerous inspections of pilot training programs; (ii) observed proficiency checks to assess pilot training programs; and (iii) with one exception, completed enough reviews of air carrier records to assure pilots had required training. Details follow.

* Inspectors were familiar with pilot training programs. We found inspectors maintained daily contact with training personnel for the air carriers, and held monthly and quarterly meetings with air carrier managers to discuss incidents and accidents, FAA initiatives, training issues, trends, etc. Further, inspectors reviewed accident, inspection, and enforcement reports as well as a wide variety of data provided by the air carriers. Finally, inspectors were actively involved in developing annual FAA inspection programs to oversee pilot training programs.

* Inspectors were qualified to inspect pilot training programs. We found Aircrew Program Managers, the inspectors providing most of the oversight for the three largest carriers included in our audit, had aircraft-specific training for the pilot training programs they surveilled. Also, Aircrew Program Managers had completed the proficiency and competency checks required for pilot-in-command of the aircraft they surveilled. Further, the Principal Operations Inspector for the smallest carrier, JetTrain, was completing training specifically related to the aircraft he surveilled.

* Inspectors completed numerous inspections of pilot training programs. For the period Fiscal Year 1994 through July 1996, we found the three FAA field offices included in our audit completed all inspections required by National Flight Standards Work Program Guidelines for pilot training programs. Further, the three offices completed more than 6,000 discretionary inspections related to pilot training programs. The inspections did not identify any significant problems in pilot training programs.

* Inspectors observed pilot proficiency checks to assess pilot training programs. We accompanied FAA Aircrew Program Managers when they surveilled simulator-based proficiency checks administered by check airmen for United Airlines and USAir pilots. We found the Aircrew Program Managers assured check airmen completed required flight test events in a realistic flight scenario, provided pre-flight and post-flight briefings, and objectively evaluated pilot performance.

* With one exception, inspectors completed enough reviews of air carrier records to assure pilots had required training. We analyzed records for 30 pilots at each of the four air carriers and found each of the pilots (i) received required flight training, (ii) held appropriate ratings for the aircraft flown, and (iii) completed required line and proficiency checks. In one case, however, we did not find documented evidence that two United Airlines pilots completed required recurrent ground training.

  In January 1996, United Airlines began requiring its pilots to personally record in automated training records that they completed computer-based recurrent ground training. These records interface with the United Airlines system for scheduling flight crews. In June 1996, we found United Airlines system for scheduling flight crews did not have an edit check to identify pilots who did not complete recurrent ground training. However, the potential adverse effect of this problem is reduced by a compensating control, i.e., check airmen for United Airlines evaluate self-tests taken by pilots for computer-based recurrent ground training during annual proficiency checks. This compensating control assured the two United Airlines pilots met recurrent ground training requirements. Nonetheless, United Airlines immediately (i) directed all pilots to ensure their records were accurate, and (ii) included an edit check in the flight crew scheduling system to identify pilots who have not met recurrent ground training requirements and prohibit such pilots from flying. Currently, FAA's Denver Certificate Management Field Office is testing United Airlines system for tracking aircrew training.

We are not making any recommendations. Therefore, FAA is not required to respond under Department of Transportation Order 8000.1C.

We appreciate the courtesies and cooperation extended by FAA during our audit. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this advisory memorandum, please call Mr. Ronald Hambrick in our Seattle office at (206) 220-7754.

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