

**Statement of DOT Inspector General Kenneth M. Mead
Regarding Investigation of Holiday Travel Disruptions
Monday, December 27, 2004**

“The Secretary has asked us to conduct a review of the events that disrupted the plans of so many passengers who looked forward to being with their families and friends during this holiday season.

Accordingly, we will be examining the causes of flight cancellations, delays, and baggage handling malfunctions associated with US Airways. Further, we will be reviewing the reasons why a computer system at Comair failed, forcing the cancellation of nearly a thousand flights.

We want to complete this work expeditiously to provide the Secretary, Congress, and the traveling public with an objective assessment so corrective actions can be taken by the appropriate parties to prevent such situations from happening again.

In addition, it has been almost four years since we last examined how well the airlines were living up to the 12 customer service commitments they voluntarily agreed to in 1999. Given that air traffic and flight delays are approaching the levels experienced in 2000, it is appropriate that we review the extent to which air carriers are meeting their commitments and have fully incorporated them into their contracts of carriage. Much has changed since the airlines pledged to improve air travel in 1999. Our pending review will take into account the changes in aviation security following 9/11 and airline industry trends, including the financial health of the industry and the impact of low cost carriers and regional jets.

The Office of the Secretary’s Aviation Consumer Protection Division is responsible for receiving complaints from members of the public regarding aviation consumer issues and verifying compliance with DOT's aviation consumer protection requirements. Should individuals wish to register a complaint, they can do so 24/7 by calling (202) 366-2220 or via email at: airconsumer@ost.dot.gov. For more information, please see the Division’s website at: <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/>.”

Note: The Secretary's request can be found on the Department's website at: <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot21504.htm>