STATEMENT OF CAPT. JOHN PRATER
PRESIDENT, AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INT'L

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to provide the airline pilots' perspective on runway safety. As you know, our pilots operate in complex airport environments every day. They fly in all types of adverse weather and with limited visibility conditions. They complete the demanding task of a safe landing over and over, often after being on duty for more than 16 hours—and being awake for more than 20 hours.

All of these tasks demand vigilance and high situational awareness. These are the challenges we face every day, in delivering our passengers safely to their gate. But the risk for a runway incursion in this environment is constantly increasing. It's an issue that must become a national aviation safety priority—and

ALPA thanks the chairman for putting it onto the Subcommittee's agenda.

According to FAA statistics, during the last 3 months of 2007, there was an average of 2.5 runway incursions every day in the United States, providing the potential for catastrophe. The FAA categorizes this risk as "unacceptable"; we agree, but I'm taking it a step further. This rate of occurrence is inexcusable.

The FAA categorizes runway incursions as either a "pilot deviation" or an "operational error," but those classifications don't tell the whole story. While assigning blame to either the pilot or the controller may be convenient, it doesn't address the root of the problem. We must understand why these runway incursions take place and then put mitigations into the system, so that we can help pilots and controllers avoid these errors.

Dozens of experts in several different countries have studied the runway incursion risk over the years and devised mitigations that can greatly lessen the risk in ground operations today. In fact, according to the Commercial Aviation Safety Team, the problem

can be reduced by as much as ***95 percent*** with the implementation of new technologies, new training, and operational techniques that increase pilots' and controllers' situational awareness.

Technological solutions include cockpit moving map displays—similar to the GPS device that many people have in their cars, the integration of ADS-B to enable pilots and controllers to track all aircraft and vehicles on the surface and up to 1,000 feet above ground level, automatic runway occupancy alerting, and digital data-linked clearances that are then displayed on the moving map. Most airline pilots, however, are still flying aging airliners with none of this technology.

Other ALPA-recommended improvements include the installation of red runway-status and -hold lights. These simple and inexpensive lights automatically provide a direct indication of runway status and warn pilots of landing and departing aircraft. With ALPA's help, the MIT Lincoln Laboratory tested this system at Dallas-Forth Worth International Airport, and since the system's

implementation in 2005, runway incursions there have decreased by 70 percent.

Not all runway safety solutions involve high-tech gadgets. Some low-tech solutions involve something as simple and cheap as a can of paint, which can be used to improve our runway and taxiway markings. The FAA issued an advisory circular in 2005 requiring that the 75 busiest airports enhance their taxiway centerline markings near runway intersections by June of this year. All but four of these airports have completed this requirement.

But our pilots fly to hundreds of airports, and ALPA strongly recommends that these surface markings be standard for all Part 139 airports—that's a total of 566. While 62 of these airports have voluntarily made these improvements—unfortunately, some spurred by fatal accidents—that still leaves roughly two-thirds of U.S. airports that need better ground markings for pilots.

Some airports have found that installing perimeter taxiways also reduces the risk of runway incursions. These taxiways allow traffic to proceed from arrival runways to terminals without

crossing arrival or departure runways. Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport completed its perimeter runway in March 2007 and eliminated around 600 runway crossings a day, not only reducing the runway incursion risk—but also reducing the airport delays by ***60 percent***.

Our union is doing its part for runway safety. ALPA is reaching out to all of our 60,000 pilots through a new communications initiative that we call "Hold Short for Runway Safety." It's designed to educate pilots on what we can do now to prevent runway incursions. Our initiative includes a website stocked with educational materials, as well as a series of newsletters, which we'll send out every couple of weeks, starting this Friday.

In 2006, in coordination with the FAA and United Airlines, ALPA also introduced an interactive runway safety DVD, which a number of airlines now use as a training tool. We will continue to collaborate with industry stakeholders to improve training and

operational procedures that will help pilots and controllers avoid the errors that lead to runway incursions.

But to adequately prepare for the increase in airport operations, and the increased runway incursion risk, ALPA urges the government to commit proper funding to improve our National Airspace System. Every stakeholder in this room and beyond must fight to upgrade it. The lives of your constituents—my passengers—depend on a safe and efficient system. It would be inexcusable to wait for another high-profile accident to spur this investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to present ALPA's views. I would be happy to answer any questions.