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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
RUNWAY SAFETY: AN UPDATE

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the pilots' perspective on runway safety. While government and industry stakeholders have begun a number of initiatives and made some improvements in runway safety since your last hearing in February, I think that we can all agree that we can do more to make our runways safer.

Less than a week ago, two ALPA pilots rejected a high-speed takeoff when they saw a small Cessna still on the runway, swerving their airliner to avoid a collision in

Allentown, Pa. According to the NTSB, the crew estimated that they missed the Cessna by as little as 10 feet. Going that speed, that's just a blink of an eye. The FAA has yet to categorize this runway incursion, but based on those accounts, I imagine it will add another "Category A" to the 2008 serious runway incursion tally — which is up to 24.

The truth is that any one of us could be on a flight that faces a similar threat. And remember, there are approximately 60,000 commercial flights in U.S. airspace every day. To make sure that the next close call — or worse — doesn't happen, the environments we work in every day have to catch up to the 21st century.

That's why today, the Air Line Pilots Association, International, will challenge both government and industry to join us in establishing a goal of *zero serious runway*

incursions involving commercial airliners. I propose that we focus our resources and attention on that goal until it is achieved and maintained, before any catastrophic event occurs.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, technological solutions are available today. They include everything from moving-map displays and ADS-B to runway status lights and digital data-linked clearances. The testing, development of requirements, and actual implementation of these solutions are moving at a pace that won't speed up without Congress's assistance, especially in the already-strapped-for-cash airline industry.

While these technologies hold the most promise for helping our industry reach the eventual goal of *zero serious runway incursions*, they do little to address it in the near term

due to funding challenges. But we don't need to sit around and wait for someone to invest in these technologies.

There are simple and cost-effective steps that can improve runway safety now. Airports around the U.S. can help our pilots navigate airfields better with something as simple as a can of paint. The FAA intends to require that all Part 139 airports provide enhanced markings by no later than 2010. We would urge airport operators to not wait for a regulation that requires these needed markings, but to include them immediately in their facility upgrade plans for the next construction season.

Airlines can do their part by standardizing their operating procedures to allow pilots to complete as much "heads down" activity as possible prior to pushing away from, or taxiing to, the gate. Following the guidance in the

FAA's advisory circular on standard operating procedures for ground operations will reduce pilots' distractions during the taxi phase, enabling both of them to focus entirely on maintaining situational awareness. The runway environment demands two sets of eyes scanning for trouble at all times, with both pilots monitoring the ATC frequency, instead of company radios.

Using the same words and phrases when navigating airfields here and around the world would help pilots during taxi ops, too. ALPA welcomed the FAA's recent adoption of the ICAO "line up and wait" phraseology and encourages the agency to take it one step further by adopting the ICAO phraseology for runway crossings as well.

Doing so will reduce the possibility of a pilot's inadvertently crossing a runway without a clearance. Let me be clear—I can attest that the potential for confusion in airport environments is already inherently high. We shouldn't increase that confusion for foreign flight crews operating in the U.S. by using different phrases from what they hear elsewhere in the world.

ALPA continues to communicate directly with our pilots through our "Hold Short for Runway Safety" campaign. We have encouraged our pilots to increase their vigilance when they are sitting at the controls of their airliner—on the ground and in the air. We will continue to send this message through newsletters and other interactive tools.

When it comes to airline safety, the bottom line is that demanding schedules, inadequate rest periods, and insufficient or inaccurate information can degrade the performance of even the most seasoned pilot or controller.

We operate in complex and demanding environments where the risk for a runway incursion is ever present and growing.

All of us must renew our commitment to improve safety throughout the operational environment. Together, we can make the goal of *zero serious runway incursions* involving commercial airliners a reality. Today, I pledge that our union will stay on guard until we reach that goal—because when it comes to airline safety, complacency is never an option. Thank you.