



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

GENERAL COUNSEL

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Catherine A. McMullen, Esq.
Chief, Disclosure Unit
U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036-450

July 23, 2012

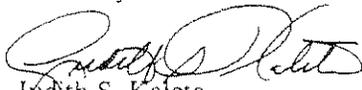
Dear Ms. McMullen:

I have enclosed a status update, prepared by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), on corrective actions relating to a whistleblower complaint filed by Vincent Sugent (DI-11-0165), concerning standard instrument departures (SID) and wind source instruments at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. The Office of Special Counsel closed this complaint on May 8, 2012.

As discussed during Special Counsel Lerner's recent meeting with Bob Rivkin, the Department's General Counsel, we understand OSC's interest in following up on these closed matters and are willing to share information on the status of corrective actions.

Please feel free to call me or Debra Rosen if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Judith S. Kaleta
Assistant General Counsel for General Law

Enclosure



Federal Aviation Administration

Memorandum

Date: JUL 23 2012

To: Judith S. Kaleta
Assistant General Counsel for General Law, C-10

From:  H. Clayton Foushee, Director, Audit and Evaluation, AAE-1

Subject: Follow-up Status Report on Office of Special Counsel Case No. DI-11-0165 regarding Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport Wind Sensors and Standard Instrument Departure Corrective Actions

This is a follow-up status report concerning corrective actions at the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport in response to safety allegations 2 and 3 described in an Office of Inspector General (OIG) report of investigation (ROI) dated August 26, 2011. The ROI was issued in response to an Office of Special Counsel (OSC) referral of case number DI-11-0165 dated February 28, 2011. The Federal Aviation Administration is reporting the following information as an update to the previously identified corrective actions:

Allegation 2: *"The Automated Surface Observing System and Wind Measuring Equipment in Detroit continue to display significantly different wind measurements, resulting in an "unsafe and untenable situation for controllers and the flying public."*

Updated Response: DTW designated the WME as the primary wind sensor for the tower and the TRACON on July 10, 2012. The FAA is continuing to collect wind information to support this decision to re-designate a primary wind sensor for Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW).

As indicated in a January 9, 2012 update, FAA deployed a WME software update at DTW which is collecting historical wind information to support analysis when necessary. DTW has been reluctant to change wind sensors without continued analysis of wind sensor data from both systems. However, the software patch installed in the WME reduces the differences in system outputs, and data from either sensor will likely produce less variation in wind direction and wind speed measurements.

Our need to compare wind sensor information was limited the past few weeks, but one four-hour period (Apr. 24, 2012) revealed a maximum difference of 40-degrees and 13-knots while the average variation in the two systems was 11-degrees and 2-knots. We are currently analyzing another period from Jun. 18, 2012 when severe weather passed through the DTW region. We expect the analysis of wind information from both sensor systems to continue for the foreseeable future as we seek to provide meaningful feedback to the employees at DTW thereby increasing understanding and raising confidence in both wind sensor systems.

Allegation 3: *"Air Traffic Controllers are unable to electronically issue Standard Instrument Departures to aircraft departing Detroit for several airports in Ohio, resulting in a "substantial and specific danger to public safety."*

Updated Response: Although the OIG was unable to substantiate this allegation, the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) feels that both safety and efficiency are enhanced in publishing standard instrument departures (SID) to airport locations that are frequent destinations. DTW has worked with Cleveland Air Route Traffic Control Center (ZOB) on airspace and routes from DTW to the Ohio airports. ZOB and DTW agreed on April 23 to pursue three preferred routes (Columbus/Cleveland/Cincinnati) "branched off" the "Palace Five Departure" and "St. Clair Four Departure" (existing) SIDs.

The FAA will coordinate with primary (Part 121/135) operators on desired SIDs and routes from DTW to Columbus/Cleveland/Cincinnati prior to publication. Preferred routes must be validated and may take up to eight months to publish.

FAA concurs with OIG's prior conclusion that neither the SID to Ohio airports or wind sensor readings constitute a substantial or specific danger to public safety, but we are committed to the actions described here to improve the timely release of aircraft from DTW and raise the confidence of controllers who depend on wind systems for safety and efficiency.

Because of the timing of this update, we expect that our next update follow in 90-days due to the rate which corrective actions can be affected. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Joseph Teixeira, Vice President of ATO Safety and Technical Training, at 202-267-3341.

cc: Vice President, Safety and Technical Training
Vice President, Terminal Services
Chief Operating Officer