



Transportation
Security
Administration

Interoffice Memorandum

To: David M. Stone
Administrator

Thru: George Karamarkovich
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Michael D. Robinson
Assistant Administrator, Aviation Operations

From: Marcia Florian
Chair, Federal Security Director Advisory Council

Date: December 12, 2003

Re: FSD Advisory Council Report from November 4-5, 2003 Meeting

On November 4-5, 2003, the Federal Security Director (FSD) Advisory Council met at TSA Headquarters. This memorandum will provide an overview of the Council meeting and the key issues that were raised by the Council and briefed to Deputy Administrator Stephen McHale on November 5, 2003.

Old Business Status Reports

The following is a brief overview of outstanding actions, for which communication, dissemination of information to all levels, and follow-through remain critical to ensure success:

Law Enforcement in TSA

- The Council was advised that the Law Enforcement Office is currently recruiting an office director and Mike Restovich has been detailed to manage the office in the interim. Concern was expressed about the current funding situation and it was shared that the office is evaluating which airports should be authorized an AFSD/LE based on the number of funded positions.

Legislative Affairs and Public Affairs

- Continue enhancing and implementing the recommendations previously put forth by the Council. The Council received an update on legislative affairs during the November meeting. The public affairs update was rescheduled for a conference call at a later date due to scheduling conflicts.

- FSDs do not have access to a centralized system that tracks recruitment, hiring, or promotion processes nor do they have access to the minimum timelines established for the processing of personnel actions.
- TSA needs to establish a TSA number tracking system, which includes the airport code, and require that tracking number to be used by TSA and HR contractors on all HR actions.
- FSDs do not have access to systems to provide information to hold contractors accountable.
- The current recruitment system is not meeting the attrition needs of airports with serious staffing shortfalls.
- The system of sending new hires across the country to attend training that will be available in the local area in a reasonable period of time is wasteful and not in the best interest of TSA. This is just one example of inefficiencies evident in current HR processes.

Due to the systemic HR issues that exist and continue to grow at an alarming rate, the Council established an ongoing subcommittee, led by Gail Linkins, to monitor the HR Crisis. During the week of November 3, 2003, the subcommittee met with Assistant Administrator Richard Whitford to discuss specific HR issues and concerns. An HR issue paper has been forwarded to TSA Leadership articulating the Council's concerns and recommendations. A copy of the issue paper is attached.

Workforce Management and Organizational Effectiveness

During the Council meeting, members expressed strong concern for what is perceived by a large number of FSDs across the country as a less than robust effort in solving the manpower issues and the cumulative negative effect on operations. The FSD Advisory Council firmly believes that TSA needs to do more and do it more quickly. The following areas of concern and supporting recommendations were discussed and briefed to Senior Staff:

- TSA should *immediately* abandon mandates to the field to continue Reductions in Force (RIFs) and forced conversions of employees from full-time to part-time status and implement a plan to stabilize the workforce.
 - While there is a mandate to meet an established FTE level by December 31, with each Area managing the overall numbers, FSDs are still being required to convert or RIF employees, even though the Area may be within its FTE allotment to meet the deadline.
 - Following the RIFs and mandatory conversions, additional employees have and are planning to leave TSA as a result of the perceived unstable work environment. TSA needs an immediate, timely, and long-term plan to stabilize the workforce and ensure adequate staffing remains in place so as to not jeopardize TSA's mission.
 - TSA Headquarters should institute a process that allows temporary duty assignments from "overstaffed" airports to those with a serious deficit for the holidays.
- A focus group should be created immediately and charged with the development of a mitigation strategy to counter the staffing crisis in the field.
 - The strategy must ensure that our dwindling staff is salvaged and the recruitment and hiring process becomes functional and affordable (e.g., ongoing assessment process, ongoing plan for attrition, etc.).
 - This is especially critical during peak travel periods (e.g., coming holidays) and for those airports experiencing rapid growth.

Issues

The Council focused most on the following issues during the November meeting:

Intelligence Gathering and Sharing

- The subcommittee met with Claudio Manno and other TSA representatives in October 2003 to discuss this issue and then toured the Cabot Tech facility. The full Council further discussed this issue during a working lunch with Claudio Manno during the November meeting. Work on this issue is ongoing.

Critical Incident/Crisis Management and Response

- The subcommittee met with Dave Fulton and other Crisis Management representatives from TSCC and Aviation Operations in November 2003 to discuss this issue and then toured the Cabot Tech facility. Work on this issue is ongoing and an issue paper outlining the Council's recommendations will be submitted in January 2004.

Diminished Resources and December 31, 2003 Deadline for 100 Percent Baggage Screening

As relayed during the September 2003 meeting, the FSD Advisory Council remains seriously concerned about how screener reductions and ongoing attrition are affecting TSA's ability to meet the December 31, 2003 100 percent baggage screening mandate. (The Council's concerns are delineated in the Human Resource and Workforce Management sections outlined below.) This issue directly impacts the quality of screening being conducted at the airports, as evident in the following:

- The number of airports using alternative means to screen baggage has risen and the December 31, 2003 requirement for 100 percent electronic screening is quickly approaching;
- FSDs are unable to complete required selectee screening at some airports; and,
- It is difficult, and in some cases impossible, to complete ongoing in-service training with the reduced staffing levels.

TSA Leadership stated in September that a plan is forthcoming to address how TSA intends to respond to the impending 100 percent electronic baggage screening deadline and the diminishing resources at the airports. The Council has requested that Headquarters make that plan available to the FSD Advisory Council members and to all FSDs. The Council will be able to provide further recommendations and support in responding to this critical issue upon review of the plan.

Human Resource (HR) Crisis

This issue surfaced during FSD Advisory Council conference calls that have taken place since the September Council meeting at Headquarters. The Council unanimously agreed that HR issues relative to recruitment, hiring, training, and HR support are growing on a daily basis and are critical. FSDs across the system have expressed serious frustrations and concerns regarding the rapid attrition of the workforce and the failure of TSA Headquarters to properly manage the workforce to respond to the personnel crisis. Additionally, TSA's HR contractor, Accenture, has not provided the level of HR support required to sustain a valued workforce in a model workplace.

Some of the key points discussed by the Council during the meeting include:

- FSDs still do not have an appropriate voice in the recruitment, assessment, and hiring of screening personnel at their airports.

- A process should be implemented immediately to ensure timely FSD input and involvement into all TSA planning efforts related to our airport missions, including policy and security directive development.
- As steps are taken through the Aviation Screening Improvement Council (ASIC) to accelerate the implementation of screening innovations, there must be FSD involvement in the Council to help facilitate communication between Headquarters and the field and to help support Council efforts. Either the FSDs or AFSDs/Screening in the DC area should be represented on the Council on a rotating basis. Further, the FSD Advisory Council requests information on ASIC, including the current issues of focus, in order to better understand the scope of ASIC. The implementation of "second pass" screening has been one positive outcome of ASIC efforts.
- FSDs should be directed to resolve routine matters having to do with support functions, such as human resources, finance, or training, with the appropriate staff organizations and involve Area staff only when exceptional matters arise. In turn, those support organizations should communicate with FSDs directly on routine matters thus eliminating the "Area Funnel."
- As processes are decentralized, Headquarters staff should be reallocated to field locations where overly burdened and inadequate FSD staffing levels are no longer sufficient to fully support operations.

We as a Council cannot over-emphasize the seriousness of the situations we are facing at our airports. Although it appears that we might be making progress, it is very clear – particularly with the holidays – that we are losing ground. The continued decline in resources jeopardizes safety and morale as well as customer service.

Senior management should empower FSDs and should place among its top priorities the issue of FSD authority. Restore it, hold FSDs accountable for their actions and performance, and deal with those who don't measure up rather than strip the authority needed to do our jobs.

We believe that we risk succeeding as an agency if FSDs are not given the appropriate authority and responsibility to complete the mission of TSA.

Future Meetings

FSD Advisory Council meetings are scheduled as follows:

- January 21-23, 2004
- March 9-11, 2004
- May 11-13, 2004
- July 13-15, 2004

Attachment

cc: George Naccara, Vice Chair, FSD Advisory Council
Aleda Robinson, FSD Advisory Council Coordinator