Boeing Air Traffic Management Executive Issues Challenge to Aviation Leaders

Designing and building a safer, more secure, and more efficient global air transportation system will take years, so the work must begin soon, a Boeing executive told industry leaders attending a conference here today.

"The effects of terrorism and weak economic growth are having an enormous negative impact on all of us," John Hayhurst, president, Boeing Air Traffic Management, said in a speech delivered at the ATC Maastricht 2003 conference. "It is easy to get so caught up with near-term needs that we ignore the air traffic management challenge that appears to some to be too far in the future to worry about today."

In fact, a return to congested airports and airways, and all of the negative economic impacts that stem from such congestion, is not that far in the future, Hayhurst said. "You all know that, and you all know that making substantive change to the way we handle traffic globally will take years to accomplish and will require an enormous effort by all of us."

Hayhurst challenged the meeting's attendees to become advocates for change within their own governments and advocates of speedier action within organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). "Political complacency on this issue is our biggest challenge -- far bigger, frankly, than any of the technological challenges."

Pursuing a systems engineering approach to the challenge, Boeing is working with aviation stakeholders in Europe, North America, and Asia to define the future requirements of a global air traffic system. The emerging requirements, refined by European stakeholders during the course of the Maastricht conference, are maturing rapidly.

Boeing also has been working on a future operational concept, based on the requirements as well as similar work being done by organizations such as Eurocontrol, ICAO, and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. To help develop an architecture that can support a new operational concept, Boeing recently developed new modeling and simulation capabilities, and initiated studies to document the costs and benefits of making changes to the current system.

Hayhurst said that while the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 temporarily depressed the demand for air travel, they also created compelling new reasons for significantly changing air traffic management around the world. "The current system was not designed with the kind of security features we clearly need." "Nor was it designed to accommodate unmanned aerial vehicles, which clearly are coming in great numbers," he said.

Boeing established its Air Traffic Management unit in November 2000 to dramatically improve air traffic systems throughout the world. Its aims are to make flying even more safe and secure, significantly reduce delays, congestion and environmental impact, keep aviation affordable and accessible for commercial, military, business and general aviation users, and support existing air traffic initiatives around the globe.

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