

Opening Statement

Good morning and welcome to the Boardroom of the National Transportation Safety Board.

I am Robert Sumwalt, and I'm honored to serve as the Chairman of the NTSB. Joining me today are my colleagues on the Board, Member Christopher Hart and Member Bella Dinh-Zarr. Consistent with his ethics obligation, Member Earl Weener has recused himself from the investigation that we will discuss in today's meeting.

Today, we meet in open session, as required by the Government in the Sunshine Act, to consider the uncontained engine failure and subsequent fire on American Airlines flight 383, a Boeing 767, at Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

During the takeoff roll, the flight crew heard a loud bang and initiated a high-speed rejected takeoff, stopping the aircraft on the runway. Fire and thick black smoke were present on the right side of the aircraft.

All 170 passengers and crew successfully evacuated the aircraft, but 21 people were injured, one seriously. My colleagues and I hope that everybody has fully recovered, or is on the way to a full recovery.

Today, we'll discuss how a high-pressure turbine disk failed, sending a fragment through the main engine fuel feed line and fuel tank, which initiated a fire. That fragment came to rest in a warehouse more than half a mile away.

We'll discuss an anomaly in the disk originating in the melting process for the nickel alloy from which it was made. We'll talk about why the flaw could not be detected during production and subsequent in-service inspections using procedures in place. And, we'll talk about new inspection processes that **can** allow such defects to be found... **before** they result in an accident.

Although everyone successfully evacuated, the investigation revealed ways that the evacuation could have been improved.

The flight crew shut down the affected right engine, and they shut down the left engine during their evacuation checklist. But the evacuation began before the checklist was complete.

Normally, the cabin crew would communicate with the flight crew to coordinate. But in this accident, there were no communications between the cabin and the cockpit before or during the evacuation. As a result, flight attendants initiated the evacuation with the left engine still running. The one seriously injured passenger was blown over by jet blast from that engine.

Today we'll discuss difficulties the flight attendants had while attempting to use the airplane's interphone system, the checklists that the pilots followed, and similar problems we've seen in past evacuations. And, we'll discuss solutions.

But let me also to say a word to the flying public: Follow your crew's instructions.

In this case, as in some prior evacuations, some passengers retrieved their baggage – despite flight attendant instructions to leave it behind. One passenger even resisted a flight attendant attempting to take away a carry-on bag... in a burning airplane.

Things can be replaced. People can't. Pilots and flight attendants need your cooperation, as a passenger, to perform safe and orderly evacuation. They'll tell you when, where, and how to exit - and to leave your baggage behind.

Fortunately, the lessons we learned from this accident did not come at the cost of human lives. Today, NTSB staff will briefly present the most pertinent facts and analysis found in the draft report. Our public docket, available at www.nts.gov, contains even more extensive information.

Staff have pursued all avenues in order to propose findings, a probable cause, and recommendations to this Board. We on the

Board will question staff to ensure that the report, as we adopt it, truly provides the best opportunity to enhance safety.

Now Managing Director Dennis Jones, if you would kindly introduce the staff.

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