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## City looks to feds to make Midway safer

(<http://www.suntimes.com/news/commentary/letters/167591,CST-EDT-vox11a.article>)

December 11, 2006

The City of Chicago extends its heartfelt sympathies to the family of Joshua Woods and to all those involved in the accident involving Southwest Airlines Flight 1248 a little over a year ago at Midway Airport. Nothing will ever replace what the Woods family has lost, and we continue to hold them in our hearts and our prayers.

The past year has been a time of intense focus on the events of that day, as those of us who oversee the operation of Midway Airport work closely with the National Transportation Safety Board to work toward a final report on the probable cause of the accident, which is expected to be released next year.

The NTSB is also charged with issuing recommendations that guide the Federal Aviation Administration and airports nationwide in standardizing their procedures and technology to enhance safety.

Improvements in technology and procedures continually strengthen the performance and safety of aviation. These improvements are needed to address the collection of runway condition reports and convey that information to flight crews. Friction reports at the time of the landing of Flight 1248 were favorable; there was only a trace amount of snow on the runway. However, several different systems to obtain runway performance are used by airports and airlines. We urge the board to recommend and the Federal Aviation Administration to require a system that can provide meaningful and universal friction reporting on winter runways so that pilots can access aircraft landing performance in real time, for every landing. The necessary technological capabilities are not yet fully developed, but when federal regulators issue such a mandate, industry responds with innovative solutions.

Significant advances in technology allowed the FAA to approve the installation of an "arrestor bed" at the end of Midway's Runway 31C, which was completed over the last two weeks. This Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS) is made of crushable concrete, which gradually stops a plane that lands off a runway. We are working with the FAA to fund this system at Midway's other three commercial runway ends. However, EMAS is not the definitive solution for all airports, and more needs to be done.

Airports rely on federal agencies to test, recommend and often to fund new technologies that improve safety and performance. An advanced radar system to enhance air traffic controllers' ability to keep track of planes and vehicles on the ground has been developed. This sophisticated technology should quickly become standard at major airports across the country. While it is scheduled to be in use at more than 34 airports by January, it has not yet been made available to O'Hare or Midway.

Our commitment to safety at Midway and O'Hare never wavers. Over the last 30 years, there have been more than 7.5 million safe and successful aircraft operations at Midway alone. The arrestor bed installations will enhance Midway's safety record, and we look forward to new technological breakthroughs that will do even more for Midway, O'Hare and airports across the nation.

**Nuria I. Fernandez, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Aviation**

### Nearly 3,000 reasons for war

On Dec. 7, 1941, more than 2,400 servicemen and -women were killed at Pearl Harbor. The war that followed had thousands of casualties, but the circumstances warranted what the war was being fought for. On Sept. 11, 2001, almost 3,000 people were killed in New York, Washington, D.C, and Pennsylvania. The majority of those killed were innocent civilians and police and firefighters attempting to save civilian lives. Today, we are at war in an attempt to keep innocent lives from ever being taken again in the cowardly manner that occurred on Sept. 11. All the news reports is that Americans are fed up with the president and the war in Iraq. How quickly we forget the horror we felt on 9/11/01. How quickly we forget how we demanded those responsible to be caught and there never be another slaughter of Americans on U.S. soil. I'm ashamed at those who question the war and the reasons behind it. There are just under 3,000 reasons why we are at war. I doubt if their families are questioning the reason our brave soldiers are fighting in Iraq.

**Arlen Pietrowski, Mount Greenwood**

**Rumsfeld polishing up legacy?**

Don Rumsfeld's leaked memo written days before he was fired sounds eerily like it was written with the help of Rep. John Murtha and other anti-war interests. It talks of changing course in Iraq, possibly involving some form of withdrawal. It discusses war failures more than war successes.

Could Secretary Rumsfeld be polishing up his tarnished legacy as he leaves his post by bailing out on his hither-to intransigent pro-war position, which is no longer believed by anyone of substance? He, like an increasingly growing number of Bush administration officials, neoconservative pundits, and Republican congressmen are distancing themselves as much as possible from the president's delusional optimism about the Iraq venture.

An increasingly isolated and tragic President Bush can only be left to mutter, "Et tu, Rumsfeld?"

**Walt Zlotow, Glen Ellyn**

**Cut off funding for war**

I'll tell you how to get out of Iraq. Congress should announce that as of six months from now, all funds supporting this misbegotten war will be cut off and all the troops should be back home before that date. The likelihood of this happening is slight, however, as Congress will dither and fret and procrastinate so that lots more young people will be maimed or die and for nothing.

**Mona Stern, Gary**

**Don't cut cop, firefighter pay**

In response to a comment published on Dec. 1, regarding pay cuts for employees who are paid with taxpayers' money in lieu of raising property taxes, I feel that this suggestion is utterly absurd. What about the honest, hardworking men and women in this city who go to work every day providing emergency services, security, and assistance to the citizens of Chicago? Do the men and women who battle raging fires, protect us from crime on the street, or help us when we cannot help ourselves deserve to be punished for the actions of corrupt politicians and city officials?

If you do not like the fact that property taxes are going to be raised, write your local alderman or move out of the city. Please do not suggest that the men and women of the Chicago Fire and Police departments need to suffer pay cuts, when they are the ones who put their lives on the line for us every day. If anything, they deserve more appreciation and recognition for their bravery from the city of Chicago and its citizens, instead of comments that are completely insulting to those who help protect and keep us safe.

**Peggy Foley (daughter of Chicago Fire Department lieutenant), Garfield Ridge**

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