

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

9/08/2014

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Huerta:

We are writing to inquire about bird strike mitigation practices at our nation's civilian airports – specifically whether incorporating bird-detection radar into current mitigation practices could reduce the occurrence of bird strikes and increase overall aviation safety. Such strikes pose a serious threat to aviation safety. As your annual reporting shows, one plane every day over the past 24 years has been forced to make a diverted landing due to bird strikes. Related industry costs are now approaching \$1 billion a year. And since 1988 in the US alone, bird strikes have resulted in 24 deaths and 235 injuries.

As you are aware, wildlife strikes can happen during any phase of flight, but the majority of incidences occur on takeoffs and landings. While effective wildlife management on and around airports can do much to reduce the risk of a wildlife strike, current mitigation practices – which include the culling of large flocks of birds by shooting or poisoning – have proven largely ineffective, evidenced by a five-fold increase in the number of wildlife strikes over the past two decades.

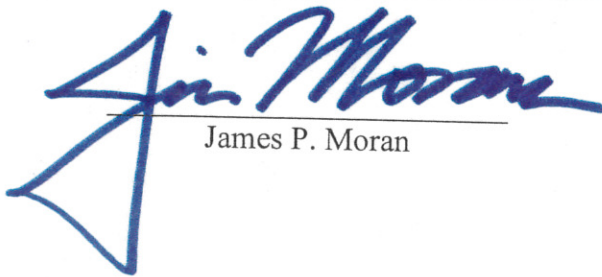
Given the need for effective and humane hazard management practices and the significant threat bird strikes pose to flight safety, we are concerned that a valuable tool in our wildlife mitigation arsenal is not being utilized at our commercial airports. Avian radar integrated with air traffic control and deployed as part of a robust wildlife mitigation strategy, can provide real-time warning system for bird activity near airports and can reduce the frequency of strikes. Avian radar systems are currently in use both domestically – by the US military and NASA – and at civilian airports in the Middle East in Europe. In Israel, through a combination of migratory tracking and bird-detection radar, the Israeli Air Force reduced bird strike incidences by 76 percent over a 30 year period.

In 2010, the FAA published an Advisory Circular on the use of avian radar systems to supplement an airport's Wildlife Hazard Mitigation Plan. Yet, in the nearly four years since the AC was published and in spite of the proven success of the systems, use of advanced bird-detection radar technology is virtually nonexistent at US civilian airports. At this time, we respectfully request an update on the status of FAA's efforts to develop, deploy and standardize the use of avian radar at our nation's civilian airports.

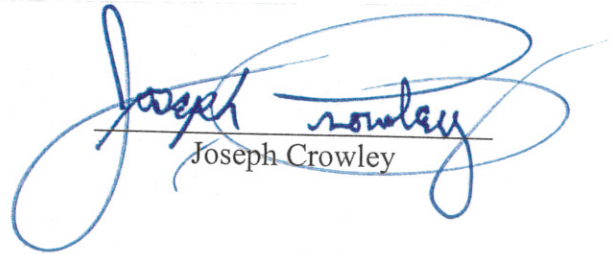
We understand and are sensitive to the fact that the technology has not been perfected. But as with all systemic improvements, like wind shear detection, only its real-time use can lead to its refinement and eventual high-rate of successful execution.

Reducing the frequency of avian strikes and improving airline safety should be a top priority, and we appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



James P. Moran



Joseph Crowley