Merit Systems Protection Board

Contact: Arlin Winefordner
(202) 653-6772, ext. 1162
V/TDD 1-800-877-8339
(Federal Relay Service)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 27, 2008

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board and the Transportation Security Administration Announce Agreement on Enhanced Whistleblower Protection for Security Officers

WASHINGTON – The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) announced today an agreement to provide enhanced whistleblower protection for Transportation Security Officers (TSOs). The memorandum of agreement was signed by TSA and MSPB.

Under the agreement, TSOs will be able to appeal whistleblower retaliation complaints to the MSPB. Under the current system, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC), an independent, Federal investigative and prosecutorial agency, has authority to investigate TSO whistleblower retaliation complaints and recommend that TSA take corrective and/or disciplinary action when warranted. Today's agreement enables TSOs to file an appeal with MSPB after the OSC closes the matter, thus providing an additional layer of protection.

"Transportation security officers are on the frontlines, protecting the traveling public," said TSA Administrator Kip Hawley. "For their sake and the sake of security, this agreement with MSPB provides TSA officers another independent avenue for whistleblower concerns."

MSPB Chairman Neil A.G. McPhie agreed, stating, "The MSPB is delighted to join in this agreement to adjudicate allegations of retaliation due to whistleblower disclosures filed by Transportation Security Officers. This third-party review should increase the confidence of security officers to make these disclosures and contribute to the traveling public's sense of safety."

TSA security officers protect 2 million passengers a day at more than 450 airports nationwide. The enhanced whistleblower protections continue the trend of major workforce initiatives at TSA.

The MSPB is an independent, quasi-judicial agency with responsibility for deciding Federal employee appeals from personnel actions taken against them, protecting the integrity of the civil service and other Federal merit systems, and conducting studies of the civil service and other merit systems in the Executive Branch.