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Fact Sheet on Potential U.S. Customs & Border Patrol Preclearance Site in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

In December 2011, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced their intent to work with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to establish a U.S. Immigration Advisory Program at Abu Dhabi International Airport as a first step towards the establishment of a passenger preclearance program. **ALPA opposes the creation of a preclearance pilot program in the UAE.**

A preclearance site allows passengers to clear U.S. customs before departure. There are 15 U.S. CBP Preclearance sites strategically located at airports where U.S. carriers perform a considerable amount of the flying (e.g., Dublin, Montreal) or all of the flying (e.g., Bermuda). The primary purpose of customs preclearance should be to facilitate travel on U.S. airlines and benefit U.S. citizens. It should not be to benefit foreign airlines financially nor facilitate unfair advantages for foreign airlines US airlines.

No U.S. carriers fly to/from Abu Dhabi International Airport. The only carrier with flights between the United States and Abu Dhabi is Etihad Airways. A U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi would, therefore, only benefit Etihad Airways, a foreign carrier that competes internationally with U.S. carriers, putting U.S. carriers and thereby U.S. airline workers at a competitive disadvantage. The potential for a preclearance site in the UAE is a significant departure from this paradigm, and puts U.S. airline worker jobs at risk by advantaging a foreign airline competitor exclusively.

Etihad, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, is a state-owned and vertically integrated airline. Already the fastest growing airline in the history of aviation, Etihad, formed in only 2003 now operates more than 1,000 flights/week and already benefits from numerous advantages over U.S. carriers, including:

- The ability to purchase wide-body aircraft from Boeing and Airbus at significantly reduced rates from U.S. and European export credit

agencies, giving them a significant cost advantage over U.S. (and European) airlines.

- Lack of transparency with respect to corporate finances.
- No UAE corporate taxes.

CBP already faces significant staffing shortages at many U.S. CBP ports-of-entry, creating long-lines and significant wait times at those domestic international airports. If a new preclearance facility is established in Abu Dhabi, it would be done without any new CBP resources hired, which will reduce the Customs service levels at other locations used by U.S. airlines. Putting valuable CBP staff in the UAE at airports with no U.S. carriers would further exacerbate the long-waits at many U.S. airports that do service U.S. air carriers.

Establishment of an Immigration preclearance site at Abu Dhabi would facilitate travel on foreign operators with direct access to international airports here in the U.S. as well as indirect access to historically domestic market locations in the U.S. A passenger traveling to Washington National airport for example may choose the convenience of utilizing preclearance to clear U.S. customs before departure, fly on a non-US carrier, and be able to quickly connect to a flight to DCA.

Given that the primary purpose of customs preclearance should be to facilitate travel on U.S. airlines and benefit U.S. citizens, **ALPA opposes the creation of a preclearance pilot program in the UAE.**