

# Do your part

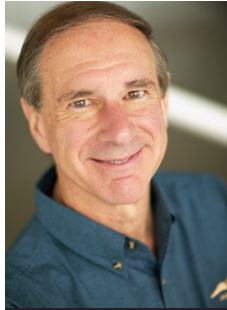
**L**ately members come up to me and comment, "Boy, am I glad I don't have *your* job!" They are usually referring to the rash

of airspace incursions in the Washington, D.C., area or one of the recent airport security issues. I almost hate to answer the telephone in the evening since lately the calls have been to inform me of another wayward pilot not following the rules.

Violating the complex Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in D.C. is nothing new, but when incursions into the inner-ring Flight Restricted Zones lead to evacuating the Capitol and surrounding buildings they make the national news. Recent press attention all began May 11 with the now-infamous Cessna 150 flight of two pilots on a cross-country directly over the heart of D.C. But it didn't stop there. Less than a week later, during inclement weather, a twin-engine airplane was escorted out of the skies for flying in much the same restricted area as the 150. Late in June, a corporate pilot flying a Beechcraft King Air 350 violated D.C. airspace once again, and caused an evacuation of the Capitol. And, over the July 4 weekend, a couple in a four-place Cessna flew near Maryland's Camp David, with the president in residence, which expands the prohibited airspace to a 10-nautical mile radius. Local pilots, as these were, should have been very familiar with the area.

Don't assume all this chaos in the nation's capital has nothing to do with you if you don't live or fly here! Each time these incursions happen, consider the panic generated about small airplanes flying above the seat of our government. Elected officials and their staffs are disrupted from their work and sent into the streets without any idea of whether they are running into a terrorist attack or whether they would be better off staying where they are. All of this inconvenience is then associated with general aviation aircraft. None of which makes it easy for those of us at your association to do our job to relax airspace restrictions.

To make matters worse, the breaches in airport security outside of D.C. are increasing, with possibly huge ramifications. In mid-June a 14-year-old stole a Cessna 152 from Isbell Field in Fort Payne, Alabama, apparently walking through a typically unlocked gate, then flying the airplane over portions of the city before crash-landing onto an airport road. The Cessna was on the ramp, door unlocked, and ignition keys on a clipboard inside the airplane. Within days the state aeronautics chief called for a re-evaluation of the voluntary guidelines for small airports, which he pro-



AOPA President Phil Boyer flies his Cessna 172 from Frederick, Maryland.

claimed do not have the stringent rules of larger, commercial airports.

Days later an intoxicated 20-year-old man stole a small airplane at Danbury Municipal Airport in Connecticut and took two friends on a joyride that ended in a safe landing at Westchester County Airport in New York state—just a few miles from former President Clinton and Sen. Hillary Clinton's residence. Neither of these two airports can be termed a *small, rural strip* and the backlash of these incidents continue to be heard.

Clinton (D-N.Y.) has developed legislation that questions much of the hard work AOPA and others have done on GA airport security to date, and proposes new studies that could mean regulations

that could prove both expensive and unnecessary. Her counterpart, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), is calling on the FAA and Department of Homeland Security to tighten security protocols for GA, asking to "revise, update, and implement outdated security rules governing small general aviation airports." Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.) is leading a delegation that is writing a letter stating, "Reviewing security in small airports is something we need to look closely at." The Westchester County executive stated, "All GA airports should match an air-carrier standard for security." In Connecticut, the governor ordered state police to investigate more than 130 airports to determine any security problems they might have.

The transgressions of a few are tarnishing all of us who fly, and their actions may impact our freedom of the skies. It is up to all of us to monitor and look for ways we can prevent these events from happening. We all encounter situations such as the gate that is always left unlocked, the push-button lock that has the code posted for all to see, the hole in the fence that we use to avoid a longer walk. Call these to the attention of your airport manager, and make sure he or she does something about them. As a renter or flying club member, ask yourself, are the keys in a place where they could be easily stolen? If so, call that to the owner's attention. Keep the scenarios I have described vividly in your mind and look for ways to prevent them from happening. When it comes to airspace, talk among our small pilot community about special flight restrictions such as, "The president is in town tomorrow. If you rent aircraft make sure your customer knows at the time of checkout of airspace restrictions nearby." Don't take any pilot's knowledge for granted—let's help one another stay out of the headlines. Use the 866/GA-SECUR(E) Airport Watch hotline to resolve issues you feel could impact airport security.

Do your part to diminish the media mania about every small airplane and small airport being a terrorist threat. If we all don't participate in this clear and present problem, we might not like the national and local solutions that will be handed to us.

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