**For Immediate Release**

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**Crop Dusters Remain Vigilant About Security 20+ Years after 9/11**

[CITY, STATE], [DATE] – Agricultural pilots remain committed to safeguarding the aircraft and crop protection products their customers depend on to produce a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food, fiber and biofuel today more than two decades after the 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States.

Security has always been important to the agricultural aviation industry, but the cataclysmic events of 9/11/2001 ushered in a new era of heightened security for all sectors of aviation, including agricultural aviation. The National Agricultural Aviation Association (NAAA) and its membership responded by aggressively promoting a set of enhanced security procedures (see link at: [www.agaviation.org/content/ag-aviation-security-measures](http://www.agaviation.org/content/ag-aviation-security-measures)). Adoption at the time was proactive, rapid and widespread. More than 20 years later, those enhanced security measures—including using propeller locks, chains or tie-downs on aircraft parked outdoors, removing batteries and disabling engines from unused aircraft, and installing hidden security switches to prevent unauthorized startup of the aircraft—have become standard operating procedures at agricultural aviation operations across America.

“Aerial applicators are well-trained professionals, and we take the responsibility of protecting the safety of our neighbors, employees, the public and the environment very seriously,” said [NAME], owner and pilot of [BUSINESS NAME]. “We demonstrated this commitment after 9/11 and continue to work closely with local, state and federal authorities to ensure the equipment used in our business is not a threat to homeland security.”

Ag Airfield Watch is another layer of security implemented by the agricultural aviation industry after 9/11. The neighborhood-watch style program reminds employees to carry out established security procedures and stay alert and on the lookout for peculiar activity. Signs of suspicious activity get reported to a TSA hotline set up for the General Aviation community.

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The aerial application industry continues to maintain this proactive approach even though an agricultural aircraft has never been involved in any terrorist activity, and many security experts in government and the private sector agree that ag aviation aircraft would not be a viable option for carrying out a potential terrorist attack. From operation near its maximum design weight to tail-wheel configuration, an ag plane is a unique aircraft to fly. It requires a very specific technique to fly a heavily loaded ag plane. It is highly unlikely a pilot not trained in these unique aircraft could do this, and the fact that nearly all ag aircraft have single-seat cockpits practically eliminates the possibility of hijacking.

NAAA educates member and non-member aerial applicators year-round about security issues in the Professional Aerial Applicators’ Support System (PAASS) program. Each year that message reaches approximately 1,800 pilots, representing the approximately 1,350 ag aviation businesses in the U.S. The goals of PAASS are to educate pilots on security issues, drift minimization and aviation safety.

“Like a lot of industries, 9/11 had a profound effect on the agricultural aviation industry,” said NAAA Executive Director Andrew D. Moore. “Although we had security measures in place before those tragic events, from an education and training standpoint 9/11 put security on equal footing with our goals as an industry to reduce accidents and minimize off-target applications. We are committed to doing everything we can to help officials make sure that public safety concerns do not deprive the American people of the benefits they receive from agricultural aviation.”

The agricultural aviation industry has been recognized by federal, state and local law enforcement and security agencies for its cooperation with government officials. One example of this cooperation is consulting with the FBI and TSA on the PAASS Program’s security module. In a report about general aviation (GA) security, the U.S. Government Accountability Office—the auditing arm of Congress—specifically recognized NAAA for creating “a program to educate aerial application pilots on safety and security issues (the Professional Aerial Applicators’ Support System).”

[OPTIONAL COMPANY INFORMATION] EXAMPLE *– [COMPANY NAME] has been in business in [NAME OF LOCATION] since \_\_\_. They treat [# OF ACRES] of local agricultural crops each year helping local farmers produce a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food and fiber both locally, nationally and globally.*

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