



NEWS RELEASE

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Senators Move to End Administration "Foot-Dragging" on Foreign Aircraft Repair Station Security

Washington, D.C. – Responding to the Bush Administration’s refusal to issue security rules for the foreign repair of U.S. aircraft, the bipartisan leadership of the Senate Commerce Committee unveiled a measure (S. 1052) to close dangerous loopholes in aircraft repair. According to Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO’s Transportation Trades Department, congressional action may be the only way to overcome the Bush Administration’s chronic “foot-dragging” on this critical security issue.

“The bipartisan message the Senate is sending is crystal clear: not only is federal oversight of foreign aircraft repair dangerously weak, but the federal government’s cavalier disregard for both public safety and congressional mandates must end,” Wytkind said.

In 2003, the AFL-CIO and its mechanics union – the Transport Workers, Machinists and the Teamsters – petitioned the Transportation Security Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration to close down foreign stations until security rules were written and audits conducted. Since the petition was summarily denied, transportation labor turned to lawmakers – including Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) – who directed the TSA to issue security regulations by August 2004 and then to begin audits of foreign stations to identify security vulnerabilities.

Despite the clear mandate embodied in the Specter amendment, TSA has yet to even issue a proposed rule and apparently has no interest in addressing the security problem of allowing U.S. aircraft to be repaired with little oversight or supervision.

The provision included in S. 1052 would force TSA to issue security rules within 90 days and complete audits of foreign stations six months later. If either deadline is missed, the FAA would be prohibited from certifying foreign repair stations.

In a growing trend that has been noted by the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Transportation and several major media outlets, domestic airlines are increasingly contracting out their aircraft repairs. Northwest and Jet Blue, for example, send work to repair stations in places such as Singapore and El Salvador. While the federal government sanctions these facilities, oversight of the safety and security of this work is severely limited.

“This bipartisan legislation tells the Administration that Congress is prepared to end years of government inaction to protect the safety and security of the flying public,” Wytkind declared.

TTD represents 35 member unions in the rail, aviation, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.

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