



The House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

Chairman Peter A. DeFazio
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FACT SHEET Safe Aircraft Maintenance Standards Act

BACKGROUND

Recent events have highlighted the importance of having one standard of aviation safety, regardless of where the aircraft is manufactured, operated, or maintained. This committee's investigation into the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) certification of the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft showed that we must remain vigilant and continue to address the various safety challenges facing our aviation system. One such challenge is FAA's oversight of repair stations located outside the United States. Foreign repair stations often have a lower standard for safety than those located within the United States, which is particularly troubling at a time when airlines are increasingly relying on outsourced maintenance work.

Airlines' spending on contract maintenance and repair services nearly tripled between 1996 and 2011, according to the Department of Transportation Inspector General's (DOT IG) most recent report on the issue, rising from \$1.5 billion in 1996 to \$4.2 billion in 2011. Moreover, according to Transport Workers Union of America, leading into the pandemic "the number of [FAA certified repair stations outside of the United States] ha[d] grown by more than 40 percent in the past six years." This is despite the fact that, in 2013, the DOT IG found that the FAA's repair station oversight "lacks the rigor needed to identify deficiencies and verify that they have been addressed" and "some repair stations may not be operating in full compliance" with FAA rules.

For years, we have pressed the FAA to move quickly to reduce the great disparity between the security requirements for U.S.-based and foreign repair stations, including mandating drug and alcohol testing and pre-employment background investigations of foreign repair station employees who perform safety-sensitive functions. Even with direct Congressional direction, the FAA has failed to satisfy either mandate, which would assure the flying public that the personnel working on a U.S.-operated aircraft have been adequately screened. These, among other measures, would help ensure that foreign repair stations follow the same safety and security standards that the FAA requires of maintenance work done in the United States, and provide the traveling public with information on where air carriers are conducting maintenance work.

LEGISLATION

The Safe Aircraft Maintenance Standards Act will address these safety and security issues by requiring:

- **Unannounced FAA inspections for foreign repair stations.** Require that all foreign repair stations be subject to at least one *unannounced* safety inspection each year.
- **Minimum qualifications for mechanics and others working on U.S.-registered aircraft at foreign repair stations.** Require supervisors and mechanics to be certificated under FAA regulations, regardless of location (e.g., technical fluency in English, completion of FAA testing, and demonstration of certain knowledge and skills).
- **Data analysis.** Require air carriers to submit a detailed maintenance report to the FAA monthly, and for the FAA to analyze these reports, along with existing data inputs, to detect safety issues.
- **A moratorium on FAA certification** of new foreign repair stations if the FAA does not implement congressional mandates within one year.
- **FAA to create a repository** for carriers to report heavy maintenance history by location and specific aircraft registration number, as well as other safety personnel metrics.

The FAA must implement these critical safety and security measures to ensure that the contract maintenance work on U.S. aircraft at foreign repair stations maintains the same level of safety as work performed at repair stations located in the United States.