



PASS, Aviation Unions Call on Secretary Chao to Address Foreign Repair Stations

Washington, D.C.—In a [letter sent to Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao](#) today, the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS), joined a coalition of aviation unions in calling on the secretary to take immediate steps to ensure the safety and proper oversight of foreign repair stations that work on U.S. aircraft.

The letter was signed by PASS, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the Transport Workers Union of America and the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO.

“Congressionally directed action regarding drug and alcohol testing, security screening for safety-sensitive personnel, and risk-based oversight at foreign aircraft repair stations are now years overdue—a reality that has led to a two-tiered safety system with glaring regulatory loopholes,” the unions wrote.

The safety of the national airspace is at risk if there is no guarantee that mechanics working in foreign repair stations are not held to the same high standards as mechanics working in the U.S. who are screened and certificated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Aviation safety inspectors at the FAA, represented by PASS, are tasked with overseeing that all repair stations are in compliance with U.S. safety regulations. However, the agency lacks the funding and personnel to adequately conduct robust inspections. The FAA no longer has international field offices overseas and any inspections of foreign facilities require advanced notice and State Department approval. “They know we’re coming,” said PASS Region IV Vice President Mike Gonzales at an [aircraft maintenance outsourcing summit](#) held earlier this month.

The unions noted the various reauthorizations of the FAA dating back to 2012 that called for repair station employees responsible for safety-sensitive maintenance on U.S. aircraft be subject to alcohol and controlled substance testing. Despite Congress mandating again in 2016 that the FAA issue such a rule, none has been enacted. “If we believe drug and alcohol testing is a true cornerstone of aviation safety, then it is regulatory malpractice not to extend this requirement to foreign stations working on aircraft used by U.S. carriers,” said the unions.

In addition, in the 2016 FAA Extension Act, Congress called on the agency once again to ensure that all overseas workers performing maintenance on U.S. aircraft undergo strict background checks and for the agency to collect data from the airlines on the frequency and seriousness of corrective measures that needed to be taken after work was done at these stations. Without such data, the FAA does not know which specific stations are providing substandard, potentially dangerous work.

“The employees we represent at the FAA undergo rigorous screening and are trained for months or even years before they are allowed to work on air traffic control systems or inspect aircraft,” said



PASS, Aviation Unions Call on Secretary Chao to Address Foreign Repair Stations

PASS National President Mike Perrone. “Why wouldn’t the agency want to insist that our high standards are matched overseas where safety critical functions are concerned?”

Acknowledging that the issues surrounding foreign repair stations pre-date the current administration, the unions urged Secretary Chao to act swiftly to prioritize aviation safety. “As part of your commitment to safe commercial aircraft operations, you have the opportunity and obligation to ensure the aircraft maintenance and repair work both at home and abroad meets the highest safety standards.”

[Read the full letter](#)