



# Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO

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**“AMERICA’S FIGHTING DEMOCRATIC UNION”**

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May 21, 2018

Honorable Daniel Elwell  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Mr. Elwell,

In an article which appeared in today’s NY DAILY NEWS, the FAA is quoted as saying that the same rigorous levels are demanded in foreign countries performing mechanical maintenance on US air carriers’ passenger aircraft as that required of maintenance performed inside the United States. While the FAA may say this publicly, this is patently false. Your statement is in conflict with the truth.

It is clear that former-Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge’s report exposes several defects in the FAA, including failures that the Office of the Inspector General has written about over the years. While aircraft maintenance facilities in the United States are heavily scrutinized, foreign repair facilities are allowed to continue to perform aircraft, engine and component maintenance with little, if any, oversight. In fact, the deck is stacked against workers in the United States, and the safety of air travelers in this country by extension, because the playing field is so uneven. For instance, United States aviation technicians must undergo rigorous background checks, drug and alcohol testing, and unannounced FAA Inspector visits; while the FAA has not acted to require workers at foreign repair and overhaul facilities to undergo background screening or drug and alcohol testing, despite outstanding mandates from Congress calling on the FAA to subject workers to such requirements. Additionally, the FAA requires inspectors to provide foreign repair facilities advanced notice of an inspection visit (one week minimum), providing an avenue for any foreign facility to hide the people, parts, and other problems they do not want the FAA to see. Even if there was an unannounced safety inspection process in place, there are simply not enough FAA inspectors to ensure compliance. The FAA actually cannot articulate who performs maintenance in foreign facilities with any level of certainty. With zero unannounced inspection ability at foreign maintenance facilities, how can the FAA honestly tell the American people that the aircraft they are flying on are safe? Gaping holes in the security and safety net are absolutely evident and your public insistence that the same rigorous standards exist on foreign soil actually flies in the face of reality.

The FAA is not a business partner to the Airline Industry. You are in fact the very last line of defense that American citizens, and all travelers have in assuring they are on a safe and secure aircraft. Your duty is to protect us, American families, not to acquiesce to, and then facilitate the desire of companies like American Airlines, Delta Airlines, United Airlines, Southwest, and JetBlue Airways, to potentially endanger air travelers by putting profits over the American people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Samuelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "S".

John Samuelson  
International President  
Transport Workers Union of America

cc: Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen, Department of Homeland Security, Secretary  
Honorable Robert Sumwalt, National Transportation Safety Board, Chairman