



Aircraft Maintenance Summit Calls Attention to Foreign Repair Stations

Never missing a chance to bring the voice of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees to the table, the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS) joined other aviation unions and industry groups at an Aircraft Maintenance Outsourcing Summit on June 4, presented by the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Business Travel Coalition. At issue was the rising use of foreign repair stations to work on American aircraft and the loss of American jobs. PASS represents the aviation safety inspectors at the FAA who are to inspect and regulate aircraft repair stations, both foreign and domestic. PASS Region IV Vice President Mike Gonzales joined a panel to discuss the ramifications of having mechanics who are not FAA certificated working on aircraft overseas without adequate oversight from aviation safety inspectors. National President Mike Perrone was also on hand and brought up the union's long-standing concerns with this practice as well as the [impact of the government shutdown](#) on the inspector workforce.

“We cannot oversee adequately any outsourced maintenance that’s over in China, Asia, or elsewhere,” Gonzales said. 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,” he said. As with the situation regarding the Boeing 737 Max, “the fox is guarding the henhouse,” Gonzales told the attendees.

He was joined on the panel by representatives of the Aeronautical Repair Station Association; TWU, Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, a former NTSB member, and an aeronautics professor from Vaughn College. Gary Peterson, a TWU Vice President and certificated mechanic with American Airlines, mentioned FAA aviation safety inspectors several times and how closely they work together, unlike at foreign repair stations.

While this summit was planned well before the tragedies involving the 737 Max, the issues surrounding that aircraft were on the minds of the participants and were the focus of the keynote address by consumer advocate Ralph Nader. Nader said in no uncertain terms that the 737 Max should not be allowed to fly again. “We are moving into a new era of risk,” Nader said. “It’s like if you had a rubber band, and you keep stretching it. You say, ‘things are okay, nothing’s happened!’ and then it snaps.”

Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.), a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee opened the event and spoke about the oversight role of Congress and the FAA. When the floor was opened to questions, President Perrone took the mic to say that PASS has been fighting this issue of inspectors not being able to properly regulate the overseas facilities “not to impede progress, or impede the industry, but to see what’s really going on,” as they do in the United States, he said. Perrone also addressed the government shutdown and how aviation safety inspectors were considered non-essential personnel and were furloughed. He told the congressman that that designation needs to change.

TWU and the Business Travel Coalition are planning to convene another summit in the fall and



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when they do, PASS intends to be there, to speak for all the employees the union represents.