

# **Transportation Security Administration Public Meeting on Security of Foreign Repair Stations**



**Comments of James Varsel  
Airline Coordinator**

**International Association of Machinists  
and Aerospace Workers  
9000 Machinists Place  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
(301) 967-4560**

My name is James Varsel, and I am the Airline Coordinator for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). The IAM represents 500,000 workers in the United States, predominantly in the air transport and aerospace industries.

The IAM is greatly interested in ensuring the U.S. aviation industry is as secure as possible. While the threat of sabotage to aircraft may never completely disappear, we must not invite our enemies to attack us by leaving back doors open.

As recent cancellations of flights originating on foreign soil indicate, there is a very real and immediate threat to this country from aircraft returning from overseas.

Nonetheless, untrained, unqualified and sometimes unknown individuals have unfettered access to U.S. aircraft during maintenance overhauls performed at foreign repair stations.

Many overhaul technicians work alone on individual assignments in confined areas. A worker can easily place a device set to detonate at a pre-determined time or altitude inside an access panel without being noticed.

The most effective way to eliminate the risk of aircraft sabotage that could occur at a foreign repair station is simple. U.S.-based airlines should be required to have their scheduled maintenance performed within the borders of the United States. This allows the airlines and federal law enforcement agencies the ability to provide sufficient oversight.

Failing that, any foreign repair facility wishing to perform scheduled maintenance for U.S.-based airlines must meet the same requirements as U.S. maintenance operators. This includes the same extensive background checks and mandatory random drug testing for employees. Background checks must be coordinated with the appropriate U.S. law enforcement agencies.

Foreign employers must be able to provide background data on each employee working an aircraft upon demand of U.S. law enforcement agencies or the owners of the aircraft they are maintaining. If they are unwilling to meet the same requirements of U.S. repair stations, then they do not deserve our business.

The U.S. aviation system is the safest in the world, but we lower our maintenance standards when repairs are contracted out to foreign facilities with little or no oversight from the airlines or our government.

The American flying public demands one level of safety, one level of security. Unless airlines are mandated to perform scheduled maintenance within our borders, the government must work to bring the level of security and safety at foreign repair stations up to the level of the in-house operations of U.S.-based airlines. Even if foreign facilities are subject to the same security requirements as

U.S.-based maintenance operations, enforcement of those requirements in foreign countries is never at the same level as it is in the U.S.

Cosmetic changes undertaken to enhance the public's perception of aviation security do nothing to make our aircraft safer. There must be one level of safety, one level of security for our aircraft, regardless of where it is maintained. Anything less would be an open invitation to those that want to do us harm.