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Chris Halsne
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KIRO News
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Submitted electronically via chalsne@kirotv.com

RE: Inspection Crackdown at Foreign Passenger Jet Repair Facilities?

Your reporting on contract aviation maintenance continues to be disappointingly one-sided.

While you are more than willing to rehash union talking points, it is troubling that you completely neglect the positive aspects of contract maintenance: a \$951 million contribution to Washington's economy employing 8,353 workers; substantial cost savings for airlines yielding lower airfare prices; and the fact that the rise in contract maintenance has occurred alongside the safest period in the history of civil aviation.

The false safety arguments against contract and foreign repair by organized labor interests are nothing new. Seeing their employment rolls shrink, desperate unions resort to anecdotal evidence and the absence of a negative to protect their own self-interests.

As your coverage reflects, the scare tactics used by unions are very effective. Ironically, many of their claims against contract repair services would make U.S. air carriers less competitive and potentially cost airline employees (including mechanics) their jobs. Raising false safety arguments to achieve short-term political and economic advantage is nothing new, but we are surprised that KIRO wouldn't explore the other side of a story with such significant consequences.

Repair stations certificated to work on U.S. airlines are held to the same stringent safety standards that apply to in house maintenance, no matter where it is performed. As you pointed out, the FAA monitors these sites annually and makes findings and recommendations for improvement. However, it is important to remember that the airlines themselves also audit these facilities. Do you really believe that an airline would continue to contract repairs to a facility that did not meet their own standards for quality?

The world is not perfect. There will always be disgruntled employees who are willing to speak against their employers when offered the sanctuary of anonymity. Yet, the aviation industry has a safety record that is about as near to perfect as is possible. This outcome is no accident. Rather, it is the result of an ever-improving set of regulatory controls that ensure the highest safety standards. What's more, it would not be in any company's interests to neglect safety, for doing so would surely lead to economic doom.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the airline business is a global industry, employing thousands of people all over the world. American airlines and aerospace companies are leaders in this global industry, setting the international standard for safety. America's aerospace goods and services are the nation's largest export product. In fact, North America enjoys a \$2.4 billion positive balance of trade in aviation maintenance services. To build a protectionist wall around this important American industry would surely inhibit growth and irreparably damage one of America's most valuable exports.



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Whether it be building upon America's largest export, expanding American aerospace leadership, helping American airlines prosper, or employing more than 274,000 of your fellow citizens, ARSA is confident that if you approach the use of contract maintenance with an open mind you will find an industry that has delivered substantial benefits for America. Should you ever have any questions about the industry and its role as the backbone of global civil aviation, we stand ready to be of service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Klein", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Christian A. Klein
Executive Vice President
Aeronautical Repair Station Association