

## Global Aircraft Maintenance Safety Improvement

One of the practices aimed at keeping airline costs competitive is the outsourcing of aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO), either domestically or to foreign countries. **The use of foreign MROs is a decision driven by economics, but it is APA's position that this is at the cost of safety for the flying public.**

United States maintenance regulations ensure the operational safety of our commercial aircraft. These regulations are among the most stringent in the world. However, foreign MROs are not being held to these same statutory requirements, as they are subject to fewer regulations and lower safety standards. This provides cheaper maintenance at the cost of time-proven checks and balances. This practice also sends American jobs overseas in exchange for lower labor costs with relaxed regulatory standards.

U.S. mechanics, technicians, and pilots have been alarmed by poor and incorrect maintenance on aircraft maintained outside of the U.S., including critical engine components held together with tape and wire, aircraft exterior doors installed incorrectly leading to mid-flight cabin depressurization, aircraft covered with flammable paint, and drug smuggling in aircraft noses, wheel wells, avionics, and lavatory panels.

The regulatory requirements that foreign aircraft maintenance facilities are not being held to include: <sup>i</sup>

- **Limited or no security background checks for workers**
- **Lack of stringent risk-based safety and security evaluations for facilities**  
While inadequacies in mechanic training, outdated tool calibration checks, and inaccurate work documentation occur in all maintenance operations, the FAA maintains limited ability to address these problems at international locations due to workforce shortage. Oversight is delegated to foreign regulators, which often include less stringent regulatory standards.
- **Limited or no drug and alcohol testing**  
Drug and alcohol testing programs required for domestic maintenance operations are often not present at foreign repair stations. U.S. technicians are subject to drug tests before they are hired and randomly in their careers when there is reasonable cause for a test or after an accident.
- **Rare or no unannounced FAA inspections**  
The FAA is resource-constrained and relies on foreign regulators to ensure maintenance practices are up to standard.
- **Low numbers of FAA-certificated mechanics and technicians**  
There are relatively low numbers of workers at these facilities with FAA certifications compared to domestic maintenance operations and labor is often conducted by workers with minimal education.

The **FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024** (HR 3935) was signed into law on May 16, 2024. Section 302 requires increased oversight of foreign aircraft repair stations, including subjecting them to at least one unannounced safety inspection each year; setting minimum qualifications for workers, drug and alcohol testing, and a threat assessment of employees at foreign repair stations. We look forward to seeing the results of this legislation and the positive impact on aviation safety at foreign MROs.

For questions or additional information please email [GAC-Chairman@alliedpilots.org](mailto:GAC-Chairman@alliedpilots.org)

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<sup>i</sup> TWU.org Foreign Aircraft Maintenance Fact Sheet: <https://www.twu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Foreign-Aircraft-Maintenance-Fact-Sheet.pdf>