

Harry E. Mitchell

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Statement of Rep. Harry Mitchell
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
4/3/08

--Thank you Mr. Chairman.

--And thank you for conducting this investigation.

--The safety lapses this investigation has uncovered are shocking and unacceptable.

--Last month, we learned that 117 planes were knowingly flown in violation of mandatory safety checks, in some cases for as long as 30 months.

--This revelation was particularly alarming to those of us in the Phoenix metropolitan area because the airplanes involved were flown by Southwest Airlines.

--Southwest is the second largest carrier at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport....the nation's 8th busiest airport.

--Southwest conducts so many flights at Sky Harbor, only two other airports play host more Southwest departures.

--As a result, huge numbers of Sky Harbor passengers were impacted by these safety lapses, albeit without their knowledge.

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--According to one initial estimate, approximately 13,000 Sky Harbor passengers were flown on planes in violation of mandatory safety checks.

--13,000.

--Even more disturbing....according to the Inspector General, these safety lapses, and the FAA's delay in addressing them, "are symptomatic of much deeper problems with FAA's oversight."

--The problems are so bad, the Inspector General is recommending "immediate and comprehensive changes" in the way FAA ensures compliance with its safety requirements.

--I believe the flying public is entitled to some answers, and I hope we can get some here today.

--I yield back.