



Press Release

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES PILOTS' ASSOCIATION
prosperity through research, negotiations and teamwork

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SWAPA Opposes Proposal to Use Cockpit Voice Data

(DALLAS) Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association today urged Senators to oppose attempts to punish, rather than protect, pilots who voluntarily report errors through established safety programs – including recent efforts to use “black box” cockpit voice recordings (CVR) as a way to enact discipline on pilots.

SWAPA joins fellow pilots from other airlines who oppose Senator Jim DeMint's proposal to allow use of CVR data for disciplinary and punitive action against pilots. The NTSB has recommended that carriers be able to “routinely download and analyze all available sources of safety information, as part of their flight operational quality assurance program.” However, the NTSB states specifically that the FAA should “provide appropriate protections to ensure the confidentiality of the de-identified aggregate data; and ensure that this information is used for safety-related and *not* (emphasis added) punitive purposes.”

“The NTSB recommendation for CVR usage might be an honest attempt to promote safety,” SWAPA President, Capt. Carl Kuwitzky said, “but the DeMint proposal is a perfect example of a good intention to increase safety that has the exact opposite effect. This proposal and, unfortunately, the NTSB recommendation, are misdirected attempts at promoting safety that will surely backfire.”

Southwest pilots fear the NTSB recommendation would jeopardize voluntary reporting program integrity that has been successful in increasing airline safety. We agree that de-identified pilot reporting and aircraft data for many years have been the basis of successful voluntary action programs; Southwest pilots worked closely with the FAA and the airline, helping to establish FAA's Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) and Flight Operational Quality Assurance (FOQA). These programs have led to an unprecedented safety record among mainline carriers, and have become industry standard. Adding the threat of privacy violation and out-of-context random monitoring of pilot conversations does nothing to promote aviation safety.

DeMint's proposal is a prime example of how CVR data use could be diverted from a safety-oriented idea to a punitive one. His proposal would specifically empower the government and airline companies to use CVR data for discipline purposes. Senator DeMint's proposal would simply provide a means to punish the entire piloting profession for incidents such as the Minnesota overfly and the Buffalo crash. Government regulations as well as airline company rules already provide a means to punish individual pilots involved in egregious safety violations.

Located in Dallas, Texas, the Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association (SWAPA) is a non-profit employee organization representing the more than 5,900 pilots of Southwest Airlines. For more information, visit www.swapa.org.

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