

United Press International®

100 YEARS OF JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE



Top News

Testimony: FAA pressured safety inspectors

Published: April 2, 2008 at 1:19 PM

WASHINGTON, April 2 (UPI) -- U.S. safety inspectors allege in testimony the Federal Aviation Administration pressured them to go easy on enforcing safety rules at major airlines.

Scheduled to testify Thursday before the House Transportation Committee, the inspectors claim FAA officials were worried more about airline profits than safety, which led to inspectors being intimidated, prepared statements obtained by USA Today indicated.

The testimony claims -- for the first time -- inspectors were pressured by FAA officials to alter findings or go easy with enforcement actions for several airlines.

The congressional hearing was prompted by two whistle-blowers who claimed FAA supervisors barred them from enforcing safety matters at Southwest a year ago. The FAA recently issued a \$10.2 million fine against Southwest for intentionally flying jets that had not received critical inspections, acknowledging its inspectors acted improperly.

"The role of inspector as safety enforcer is becoming increasingly overshadowed, and inspectors are being pressured by FAA management not to pursue enforcement actions," said Tom Brantley, president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists union representing FAA inspectors, in prepared testimony.

The FAA has conducted an internal review in the past month and will announce changes in how it manages enforcement teams, spokeswoman Lynn Tierney said.

© 2008 United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

This material may not be reproduced, redistributed, or manipulated in any form.