



FAA Inspectors Accuse Officials Of 'Coddling' Airlines

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Washington, D.C. (AHN) - Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspectors have accused the agency's officials of ignoring their safety recommendation on commercial planes, pressuring them to change or soften findings unfavorable to airlines and delaying enforcement actions against large carriers.

The claims were part of testimonies submitted in advance by two FAA whistle-blowers to the House Transportation Committee, which will

hear the allegations Thursday. They are Tom Brantley, president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists union representing FAA inspectors, and Richard Andrews, a recently retired inspector.

Rep. Jim Oberstar, D-Minn., chairman of the Transportation Committee, described the FAA officials' relationship with airlines as a "culture of coziness."

In their testimony, the whistle-blowers claimed that two FAA inspectors overseeing Northwest Airlines have filed complaints against their managers for admonishing them when they objected to soften their findings against the carrier.

Brantley and Andrews also alleged that the FAA did not act on a March 2007 report of an inspector that the United Airlines kept expired batteries that power emergency slides of its Boeing 777s. They further claimed that the agency allowed Continental Airlines to use 4,000 overhauled life vests discovered in 2003.

ABCNews.com quoted a United spokeswoman as saying that the expired batteries were replaced in November. Andrea Newman, Northwest's vice president for government affairs, said the airline has never asked the FAA to alter inspection reports. There was no comment from Continental Airlines.

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