



# Memorandum

**U.S. Department of  
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation  
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Audit Announcement—Review  
of the Federal Aviation Administration’s Oversight  
of Airlines’ Regulatory Partnership Programs and  
Internal Review Process  
Project No. 08A6004A000

Date: February 11, 2008

From: *Lou E. Dixon*  
Lou E. Dixon  
Assistant Inspector General  
for Aviation and Special Program Audits

Reply to  
Attn. of: JA-10

To: Assistant Administrator for  
Financial Services and Chief Financial Officer

The Office of Inspector General plans to review the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) response to whistleblowers’ complaints regarding FAA’s oversight of Southwest Airlines. On February 6, 2008, the Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure requested that we determine whether FAA’s Security and Hazardous Materials Division thoroughly investigated this matter and took corrective actions in a timely manner. The Chairman stated that the whistleblowers provided detailed documentation showing that an FAA inspector, responsible for overseeing Southwest Airlines, demonstrated extremely poor judgment by allowing the air carrier to operate aircraft in revenue service without properly inspecting the aircraft for fuselage cracks.

The objectives of our review will be to determine (1) the thoroughness of FAA’s investigation of whistleblower allegations and (2) the type and timeliness of corrective actions FAA took in response to any inappropriate inspector actions. We will also examine FAA’s air carrier oversight processes, as they relate to this complaint, to determine if there are areas in which FAA could strengthen its oversight.

Our audit will include work at FAA Headquarters, regional offices, Flight Standards field offices, and air carrier offices.

We plan to begin the audit this week and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at (202) 366-0500, or Tina Nysted, Project Manager, at (404) 562-3792.

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cc: FAA Chief of Staff  
Anthony Williams, ABU-100  
Martin Gertel, M-1