

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION PROGRAM**

CASE #EWB17594

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
Public availability to be determined under 5 USC 552**

Investigation Team: David P. Smith (IIC) (Air Carrier Maintenance)
Laurie Armetta (Frontline Manager Maintenance Miami FSDO)

Person(s) Interviewed: Carlos Jimenez (Complainant, AMT MIA)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Richie Rivera (Union VP MIA)
Michael McIntosh (Union Asst. VP MIA)
Patricia Martinez (HR Specialist MIA)
Erin Albuquerque (AMT MIA)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Edwin Rivera (Supervisor Line MX MIA)

[REDACTED]
Roy Fonseca (Managing Director MX MIA)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Erin Albuquerque (AMT MIA MX)

Attended Interviews of American Airlines Management Personnel

[REDACTED]
James Arnold (Manager FAA Liaison American Airlines DFW)

Other Investigation Activities: The investigation team reviewed American Airlines Service Check Inspection Cards, A Check Inspections Cards, ELT Shop Records, numerous Logbook Pages, AMM References for FA Seatbelt wear, AMM References for Cargo Liners and numerous other documents. The team also reviewed PTRS and SAS entries pertinent to the investigation, and previous EIS entries related to the allegations.

FINDINGS & FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

ALLEGATION 1: Pressure on American Airlines Mechanics at the Miami Maintenance Base to not document discrepancies. Contrary to:
14 CFR 119.65(d)(3)

Investigation: The complainant alleged that on April 19, 2017 he was removed from his bid assignment of Terminal East Line Maintenance and placed on Taxi Tow Crew because, he had previously documented findings outside of the scope of his assigned

Inspection areas. The complainant provided video¹ evidence [REDACTED], describing why the complainant had been reassigned. In the video, [REDACTED] that the complainant had been reassigned because he had documented findings that had been considered by American Airlines Miami Base Management, to have been outside the scope of his assigned inspection task. The investigation verified that the complainant had generated numerous Baggage Compartment write-ups, as briefed [REDACTED] in the video. Also verified was that these findings resulted in taking an aircraft out of service since the Miami Base didn't have replacement parts in stock or the ability to repair the damage documented. Numerous interviews were conducted with American Airlines Mechanics that were either present at, or heard [REDACTED] briefing. All interviewed parties stated that because of that briefing they believed they too could be removed from the crew they were awarded through the bidding process if findings were documented. The investigation determined there was pressure to not document finding due [REDACTED] explanation during the recorded video, and his description and explanation of the Continuous Airworthiness Maintenance Program (CAMP).

Finding: A violation of a regulation, order or standard of the FAA related to air carrier safety is substantiated.

Corrective Action: American Airlines has consulted [REDACTED] on the requirements, description and definition of the CAMP. They have also committed to a meeting with the Maintenance Department Senior Management Team in Miami to discuss the importance of the CAMP and the potential for misunderstanding when discussing it with employees.

A Compliance Action has been documented in the Program Tracking and Reporting Tool (PTRS) under record ID number FS40201700008.

ALLEGATION 2: Improper sign-off of underwing fuel tank access panels.

Investigation: This investigation was reported under and accepted by AAE-300. The following is an excerpt from the Aviation Safety Hotline Complaint Report of Investigation S20170000559 conducted by the American Airlines Certificate Management Office;

On April 3, 2017, an Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT) documented seven discrepancies (Maintenance Item Control (MIC's) 33606924, 33606925, 33606926, 33606927, 33606928, 33606929 and 336069300) stating the aluminum knitted portion of the underwing fuel panel gaskets were sticking out. On the same day another AMT performed a visual inspection and determined the aluminum knitted gaskets were not exposed. The AMT trimmed the excessive blue rubber portion of the

¹ Video was provided by the complainant. This video was made by a person that was in attendance at [REDACTED] meeting with AMT's at the Miami Base. The meeting was conducted at the request of Union Officials who wanted Miami base Leadership to explain why the complainant had been removed from his awarded bid.

fuel panel gasket per American Airlines Repair Document (AARD) 28-11-00-1 and performed a leak check of the underwing fuel panels per Aircraft Maintenance Manual (AMM) 28-11-00. Our investigation revealed the underwing fuel panel gasket is made of an aluminum knitted portion and surrounded by a larger blue rubber seal. The aluminum knitted portion is responsible for ensuring the seal between the wing structure and access panel. AA Engineering is aware of the older fuel panel gasket design and that a portion of the rubberized material can migrate from the panel. The migration is acceptable as long as the aluminum knitted portion is not exposed per AARD 28-11-00-1. On May 5, 2017, the complainant e-mailed two pictures showing a portion of the seal exposed from the panel. The FAA is unable to determine if the aluminum knitted portion of the seal was exposed. Upon reviewing aircraft maintenance history there has been no reported underwing fuel leaks. AA maintenance inspects the underwing panels every 60 hours, during a "PS" Check, and at 100 hours, during an "A" Check. On May 9, 2017, inspector conducted a phone interview with the AMT responsible for performing maintenance on underwing fuel access panel gaskets for aircraft N976NN (3MU). The AMT stated he trimmed the fuel access panel gaskets material per AARD 28-11-00-1 and performed a leak check on fuel panels per AMM 28-11-00.

Finding: A violation of a regulation, order or standard of the FAA related to air carrier safety is not substantiated.

Corrective Action: None

ALLEGATION 3: Operation of an un-airworthy aircraft.

Investigation: The complainant alleged that on April 18, 2017, American Airlines knowingly operated aircraft Ship Number 029 in an un-airworthy condition. The complainant alleged that the aircraft was returned to service with a Flight Attendant shoulder harness frayed beyond limits. The investigation concluded that the aircraft logbook contained a proper sign off in accordance with the Aircraft Manufacturers Maintenance Manual (AMM) task 25-22-00-210-002-A. Without being able to re-inspect the flight attendant shoulder harness immediately after sign off there is no way to determine if the seatbelt harness was out of limits with the inspection criteria contain in the AMM. A physical inspection by the investigative team was completed on several aircraft of the same make and model as the alleged aircraft. None were found to have frayed seatbelt shoulder harnesses.

Finding: A violation of a regulation, order or standard of the FAA related to air carrier safety is not substantiated.

Corrective Action: None

ALLEGATION 4: Failure to properly document removal of Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT).

Investigation: The complainant alleged that on November 17, 2010 American Airlines improperly documented removal and replacement of several aircraft ELT's on different aircraft resulting in an air interrupt for aircraft 3FD. The aircraft alleged to have improper documentation are ship numbers, 3EN, 3GJ, 3FD and 3CN. An exhaustive search of aircraft records was completed by American Airlines Quality Assurance Department for all records for these aircraft and for ELT serial numbers 1153426-00538, 1153426-00877 and 1153426-00674. The records found indicate that serial numbers 1153426-00538 and 1153426-00674 ELT's had shop visits in November 2010. Those records indicated that both ELT's passed their functional test and only 1153426-00538 had repairs done. No logbook pages were retained by American Airlines past the two year required retention. This allegation had previously been investigated by American Airline Certificate Management Office, Avionics Inspector Heimlich. An interview with Inspector Heimlich determined that all maintenance records meet regulatory standards and no findings were substantiated. No records of this investigation have been retained past the retention requirements imposed by FAA Order 1350.14B.

Finding: A violation of a regulation, order or standard of the FAA related to air carrier safety is not substantiated.

Corrective Action: None