

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2107

Cosponsor Legislation to Close the Air Cargo Security Loophole

Two years ago, here's what the cargo industry said about the risk of cargo bombs:

“Unlike members of the passenger industry, the risk of explosives on all-cargo aircraft is a secondary threat and the TSA rules and regulations correctly recognize this difference.”

- Cargo Airline Association, July 25, 2008

After last month's bombing plot on two cargo planes, here's what the press reported:

“The fact that at least two packages containing explosives could be placed on cargo-only flights to England and Dubai, one in a FedEx shipment from Yemen, was a dramatic example of the risks, but the dangers have been obvious for years...”

- Associated Press, October 31, 2010

CLOSE THE AIR CARGO SECURITY LOOPHOLE FOR ALL-CARGO AIRCRAFT

November 16, 2010

Dear Colleague:

As the recent thwarted terrorist bombing plot from Yemen demonstrates, Al Qaeda views aircraft that carry only cargo as a vulnerability in our homeland defenses. Thankfully, the October 29th attack was disrupted by timely intelligence sharing; however, the lack of comprehensive screening of cargo carried on all-cargo aircraft leaves a gaping hole in our aviation security systems that could be exploited, putting pilots, people on the ground, and our economy at risk.

As a result of the requirement I authored in the law implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, all cargo carried on passenger planes must be screened before it is loaded onboard. At the time, I sought to include all-cargo aircraft as part of this mandate, but the cargo carriers fought this requirement, and I agreed to remove it to ensure that at a minimum passenger planes would be covered -- with the intention of revisiting this security loophole in the future.

In the aftermath of the Yemen plot, now is the time to extend the 100 percent screening mandate to cover aircraft that transport only cargo. Most of the freight on these planes is not physically screened; instead, paperwork checks of the companies that prepare and deliver the cargo for shipment on the aircraft are relied upon as a security measure, along with other practices that fall far short of 100 percent screening.

Following Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's foiled attempt to strike our country using bombs hidden in all-cargo planes, it is clear that our country has been warned. Failure to respond to this warning by physically screening all cargo before it is loaded on all-cargo planes would be to ignore a known security weakness at our peril.

I am introducing legislation today to close the dangerous cargo loophole for all-cargo carriers. My legislation is endorsed by the Independent Pilots Association, which represents the 2,600 professional airline pilots of United Parcel Service (UPS) Airlines, and the Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations (CAPA), a trade association comprised of over 28,000 professional pilots.

If you would like to be an original cosponsor of this legislation, or would like more information, please have a member of your staff contact Mark Bayer of my staff at 5-2836.

Sincerely,



Edward Markey