

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell said today reports that Southwest Airlines has flown thousands of passengers on aircraft that federal inspectors deemed “unsafe” are a “serious breach of the law and public trust.” Mitchell, a member of the House Aviation Subcommittee, vowed to “find out how many Phoenix passengers may have been in danger.” [Source: [CNN.com](#), March 6, 2008]

CNN.com reported today that it obtained documents that “allege that some management officials at the Federal Aviation Administration, the agency responsible for commercial air safety, knew the planes were flying ‘unsafely’ and did nothing about it.”

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, of which Mitchell is a member, is scheduled to examine the allegations on April 3.

“Thousands of passengers travel to and from Phoenix every day on Southwest,” said Mitchell. “These allegations represent a serious breach of the law and public trust. We’ll be investigating these charges, and I will do everything I can to find out how many Phoenix passengers may have been in danger.”

According to media reports, “statements made by one of the FAA inspectors seeking whistle-blower status, a manager at the FAA ‘permitted the operation of these unsafe aircraft in a matter that would provide relief’ to the airline, even though customers were on board. The safety inspections ignored or delayed by the airline were mandated after two fatal crashes and one fatal incident, all involving Boeing’s 737, the only type of airplane Southwest flies.” [Source: [CNN.com](#), March 6, 2008]

The Wall Street Journal reported this morning that Southwest “flew hundreds of thousands of passengers in the planes from June 2006 to March 2007 without complying with a September 2004 safety directive to inspect for fuselage cracks.” [Source: [The Wall Street Journal](#), March 6, 2008]