

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

May 18, 2009

The Honorable Calvin L. Scovel, III  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
West Building – W70-300  
Washington DC 20590

Dear Inspector General Scovel:

Although the investigation is not yet complete, initial hearings held by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) revealed evidence that suggests inadequate pilot training and fatigue may have played a role in the fatal crash of Colgan Flight 3407 on February 12, 2009. Apparently, the pilot of Flight 3407 had failed three initial check rides for instrument rating, commercial license and commercial multi-engine certificate, and may have lacked adequate training for the situation and circumstances that led to the tragic accident. Questions were also raised at the NTSB hearings about pilot fatigue since both pilots traveled significant distances to their duty station in Newark, New Jersey prior to their workday. These circumstances have raised broader concerns about the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) regulations governing pilot training and fatigue, industry practices to ensure pilot competence, pilot training programs, the ability of the airlines to verify pilot qualifications, and the FAA's oversight of industry compliance with relevant safety regulations.

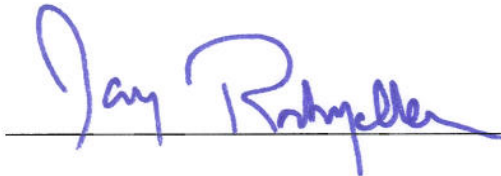
Adequate pilot training and rest is a basic prerequisite to make certain the air transportation system achieves a high level of safety. Such regulations, however, must be paired with vigorous FAA oversight of airline compliance to have a credible effect. Therefore, we request that your office:

- (1) review the FAA's standards for certification of commercial pilot training programs and licensing, including international requirements;
- (2) determine how often air carriers update and train pilots on new technologies in aircraft types in which they hold certifications, and whether such training is timely and sufficient to maintain flight safety;
- (3) assess the extent to which FAA oversight of these training programs ensures the agency can verify pilots are receiving appropriate training, and what actions should be taken in cases where pilots repeatedly fail training or other tests;

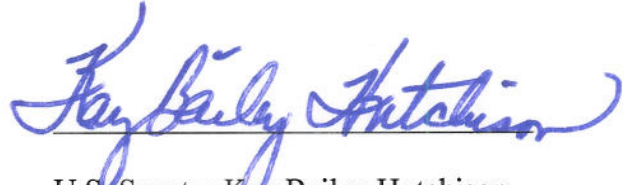
- (4) examine what warning technologies, including stall warning systems, are included in flight simulator training compared to classroom instruction, and the impact of this difference on flight safety;
- (5) evaluate the ability of the FAA and other stakeholders to verify that pilots have the appropriate qualifications and have the required training to operate specific aircraft;
- (6) review FAA regulations and airline policies regarding crew rest requirements and fatigue issues, including the role of pilots' domicile and duty location, and the oversight and enforcement of these regulations and policies; and
- (7) examine any relationship between commercial aviation accidents, pilot experience, and pilot compensation.

Please contact our staff, Rich Swayze at (202) 224-9000 or Jarrod Thompson at (202) 224-5184 when you are ready to initiate this study.

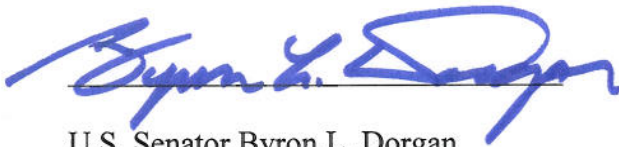
Sincerely,



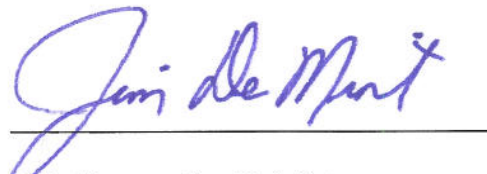
U. S. Senator John D. Rockefeller IV  
Committee Chairman



U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Committee Ranking Member



U.S. Senator Byron L. Dorgan  
Subcommittee Chairman



U.S. Senator Jim DeMint  
Subcommittee Ranking Member