



U.S. Office of Special Counsel  
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# **OSC Transmits Department of Transportation Report on Aviation Mechanic Re-examination Program to the President and Congress**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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WASHINGTON, DC / November 16, 2009 – Today the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) transmitted to the President and Congressional oversight committees for the Department of Transportation (DOT) findings of an agency investigation into ongoing delays and deficiencies in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA's) effort to re-examine airframe and power plant (A&P) mechanics who hold questionable A&P mechanic certificates issued by St. George Aviation Testing Center (St. George), an enterprise found to have issued A&P mechanic certificates under fraudulent conditions.

OSC received allegations from a whistleblower, Gabriel D. Bruno, former FAA Manager of the Orlando Flight Standards District Office, and referred them to the former Secretary of Transportation for investigation. Mr. Bruno alleged that, during the current phase of the St. George re-examination program, FAA is administering to

mechanics a substantially modified and abbreviated version of the standard A&P mechanic certification exam, consisting of the written and oral tests, but omitting the hands-on practical test. The agency report and supplemental report, which were prepared by FAA in coordination with the DOT Office of Inspector General, confirmed Mr. Bruno's allegations but concluded that FAA has discretion to omit the practical test from the re-examination administered to St. George certificate holders. FAA also addressed Mr. Bruno's concern that several mechanics have not yet been re-examined by reporting that the re-examinations are nearly complete.

In response to the investigative findings, FAA has initiated corrective actions to improve its oversight of designated mechanic examiners (DMEs) who administer mechanic certification examinations. Among other corrective actions, FAA established the Designee Quality Assurance Branch, revised relevant agency guidance to institute stricter controls over DMEs, and offered a training course on DME oversight to aviation inspectors.

The agency investigation also revealed that a St. George certificate holder performed maintenance and inspections on an aircraft operated by Chalk's Ocean Airways that later crashed in December 2005. Although the mechanic failed two re-examinations and his certificate was subsequently revoked, documentary evidence reviewed by FAA was inconclusive as to the mechanic's role, if any, in the accident.

OSC determined that the agency's reports contain all of the information required by statute and the agency's findings appear reasonable. Notwithstanding this conclusion,

we note that, in his written comments on FAA's reports, Mr. Bruno raised several issues that warrant the agency's consideration as it contemplates future policies and actions.

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