

TSA planning to inspect shops that repair jets

By Thomas Frank, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Thousands of airplane maintenance shops in the U.S. and abroad would get increased scrutiny to make sure they are not easy prey for terrorists looking to sabotage U.S. jets during routine repairs, a government proposal says. Some experts and lawmakers have warned for years about potential terrorist saboteurs infiltrating airplane repair shops, and have urged security oversight. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) says the greatest danger is posed by repair shops that are on or next to airports because a terrorist could take control of an airplane.

A TSA regulation proposed Monday would for the first time enable the agency to inspect airplane repair shops. If the TSA found a problematic repair shop, the agency would tell the Federal Aviation Administration to suspend the shop's operating license.

TSA Assistant Administrator Lee Kair said the new requirement "guards against the potential threat of an aircraft being destroyed or used as a weapon." The agency is soliciting public comments on the proposal and could finalize it later this year.

Airplanes ranging from small recreational planes to wide-body jets are repaired at more than 4,200 shops across the U.S. as well as at 700 shops abroad, in countries such as France, Germany, Singapore, Egypt and Jordan.

The shops include small operations that fix seat cushions and massive complexes that overhaul engines.

Some industry officials say lawmakers have overstated the potential threat posed by repair shops, noting that shops must be inspected and licensed by the FAA to work on U.S.-based planes.

TSA Repair Station NPRM as forwarded by MT Dept. of Aeronautics.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) published in the Federal Register a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on November 16 to strengthen the Aircraft Repair Station Security program. The proposed rulemaking would establish security requirements for maintenance and repair work conducted on aircraft and aircraft components at domestic and foreign repair stations certificated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The NPRM requires FAA-certificated foreign and domestic repair stations to adopt and carry out a standard TSA security program to safeguard the security of a repair station, the repair work conducted, and all aircraft and aircraft components at the station. The program will require certificated stations to implement strict access controls, provide security awareness training, and allow for Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) inspections. These elements of security that the TSA would mandate, regulate and inspect are in addition to the current FAA safety inspections that already take place at these repair stations. To read the notice go to: http://www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/nprm_aircraftrepair.pdf Comments will be accepted until February 19, 2010 and can be made to: Docket No. TSA-2004-17131, the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. or mail, fax to Docket Management System, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, Washington, DC 20590-0001; Fax: 202-493-2251. For further info contact: Celio Young, Office of Security Operations, TSA-29, Transportation Security Administration, 601 South 12th Street, Arlington, VA 20598-6029; telephone (571) 227-3580; facsimile (571) 227-1905; email celio.young@dhs.gov.