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Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO  
May 23, 2017  
International Aviation Club Luncheon  
Willard Hotel  
1401 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC**

Good afternoon and thank you to Jodie and the International Aviation Club for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am proud to serve as the International President of Association of Flight Attendants, representing 50,000 Flight Attendants at 20 airlines. Our union also partners with the Communications Workers of America, representing nearly 20,000 Customer Service agents. Together with our ALPA flight deck partners and all of the members represented by the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, we help tens of thousands of flights get in the air safely every day - and even often inspire smiles.

Last night through the structure of our unions and in coordination with our airlines we worked quickly in the wake of tragedy in Great Britain to confirm the safety of crews and other aviation workers. Andy Burnham, the mayor of Manchester, said he was overcome by grief, shock and anger. "After our darkest of nights, Manchester is today waking up to the most difficult of dawns," he said. "These were children, young people, and their families." Let us all pause for a moment to honor those lost and send our support and healing thoughts to the people of Manchester and the families who grieve today.

Terrorism or natural disasters immediately call attention to the fact that in aviation we are connected to every community and each economy. Paris, Brussels, New Orleans, Thailand, Mumbai, Istanbul, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Boston, Tel Aviv... We mobilize to ensure safety of our own, then impact of operations for continued service often with altered procedures affecting millions of travelers and even assist in the humanitarian response. We carry grieving families to join together with loved ones and brace for the potential impact on aviation families if the event substantially alters confidence in air travel itself.

The American Airlines Flight Attendants working flight 31 from LAX to Honolulu last Friday certainly inspired confidence in the training and expert response of aviation's first responders. Yesterday, the criminal complaint filed to charge Anil Uskanli with Interference with a Flight Crew revealed disturbing details. With no checked or carry-on baggage, Uskanli boarded the flight with only a laptop computer, power cord and a few other items in his pockets. After moving about the cabin with his computer, exploding in a fit of rage when another passenger opened the unlocked lavatory door and then finally wrapping his head in a blanket while attempting to move forward to the flight deck with the laptop in his arms – Flight Attendants shouted commands for him to turn back,

blocked him with the drink cart, instructed other passengers to help, subdue him and then move his laptop dropped on the drink cart to the least risk bomb location where they also built a bomb stack. Passengers were quoted saying, "The Flight Attendants just were really heroic." But no viral video of heroics when this crew served as the last line of defense without hesitation as the passenger became violent and they believed their lives could be in danger. In fact, they were so flawless in their reaction that many of the passengers on the Airbus 321 didn't even know anything had happened until the pilots descended to 5000 feet and announced it was due to a security breach.

The criminal complaint also gives rise to serious questions about events leading up to Uskanli's boarding of the flight. Neither the crew, nor American Airlines knew he had previously been detained by local authorities, charged with a misdemeanor after attempting to enter a secure area of the airport and released an hour later to catch his flight without any luggage. Had the crew been informed prior to his arrival, it is likely that his behavior during boarding coupled with the earlier incident would have kept Uskanli on the ground. We are left to question if the current state of aviation had any impact on this lack of communication or reticence to act on the first security breach to further question the purpose of Uskanli's travel.

We commend Oscar Munoz for his response to the horrific event on United Express in early April. Instead of placing blame on security personnel or United contract partner Republic Airways, Munoz took ownership, shouldered the blame and set forth policies that include better communication with law enforcement, partners and tools for workers on the frontline to empower common sense by the professionals who know our passengers better than anyone. This sent the message that "we're in this together" through every part of aviation. That is perhaps the most important ingredient necessary to promoting safety and security in addition to a pleasant travel experience.

But the United event and follow on video-taping mania has highlighted serious issues in aviation that need immediate attention. There is a rising tension on board our flights and in our airports - in our experience exacerbated by a national narrative full of disrespect for authority, decency and decorum - and fewer of aviation's first responders to manage it.

When Flight Attendants simply attempt to do safety compliance checks, they are greeted with refusal and the response "What are you going to do, drag me out of here???" In another report a Flight Attendant attempted to tell a passenger to safely put out a cigarette he had lit while at his seat. His only response was to blow smoke in her face. We don't have the option to call for help from authorities in the air and on the ground we are experiencing some authorities refusing to respond because they don't want to end up on the news either.

Cabin crew are left to wonder what's worse: failing to comply with federal regulations as part of their job, or doing their safety sensitive work and ending up on the evening news or facing discipline from management because someone didn't like the instruction they

gave.

We painfully learned from the fallout of gaps in aviation security following the events of September 11, 2001. In the wake of grieving the loss our friends and flying partners our profession and industry changed forever. Over 100,000 aviation jobs were lost nearly over night, most airlines entered bankruptcy and some did not emerge. We lost on average 40 percent of pay, pensions were terminated, work rules were eviscerated, staffing was cut to minimums, and many of the amenities of flying were removed as we had fewer tools to appease weary passengers. Airlines lost billions of dollars and for nearly 10 years the driving force was to cut costs in every area but executive compensation. Cabin interiors were redesigned with smaller seats, closer together. Bankruptcies gave way to airline mergers to cut capacity in the industry so that planes are fuller than ever with more seats, less leg room and carry on baggage at all-time highs as checked baggage fees drove more luggage to the door of the airplane.

Flight Attendants and other aviation workers are working anywhere from 25% to 50% more hours on the job to make ends meet while fatigue studies commissioned by Congress show cabin crew are not getting enough rest.

Flight Attendants and gate agents working on U.S. regional airlines, providing feed to major carriers earn on average 45% less, often have fewer work rule protections and many times one Flight Attendant must manage all safety, security and service requirements for 50 passengers who bought the ticket through the mainline Delta, American, United or Alaska.

But, we're all in this together.

Ticket prices are 40 percent below 1980 levels when adjusted for inflation. Today, everyone can afford to travel. Airlines are making money again despite these reduced ticket prices and through capacity cuts, aircraft reconfiguration, ancillary fees and the reduction in fuel prices make this possible. Cramped together in cabins the flying public is in an uproar about 28" seat pitch and fees for everything from baggage to food and seat selection even as DOT metrics show the best statistics since 1992 for completion of flights, proper handling of baggage and the lowest recorded metrics for denied boarding.

Still, people are angry. People can only be stretched so far - ultimately the rubber band breaks. In the U.S. increased hours on the job with essentially stagnant wages, rising healthcare costs and degradation of retirement security has resulted in an inequity that is shaping our politics of extreme division. Studies show that passengers are more likely to experience frustration with their seat on a plane after walking through a first class cabin to get to it. Humanity is pushed and pulled. We are seeing the rubber band break on our planes and we need immediate attention to fix it. This inequality has taken an extreme toll on our communities and the American experience - the worker's world-wide experience - is jammed together on our planes.

Consumer behavior doesn't support changing the conditions of today's competitive aviation market, but there are steps we need to take in aviation to ensure we don't get this wrong.

Staffing at the gate and on the plane needs to increase to ensure aviation workers have the ability to identify problems early and the time to de-escalate and resolve them. It is past time to install cockpit secondary barriers and follow through with providing crewmember self-defense training to all cabin crew. We must tackle the issue of out of context videotaping that violates the privacy rights of other passengers, showcases events out of context, escalates tensions and provides free surveillance of crew movement to terrorists. We need to address the issue of high energy fires and mitigate unnecessary risks. We need to strictly enforce the carry-on baggage policy at every stage of travel including transit or connection in order to prevent a conflict over storage space before it begins.

Flight Attendants need clear guidance in dealing with non-compliant passengers and they need to know management and regulators support them in following these procedures. We encourage placards reinforcing the role of crewmembers and passenger acknowledgement at the point of check-in. Air France provides a great example with this message clearly displayed at gates:

"Air France teams are at your service to ensure your well-being in all circumstances.

**As each customer's serenity is essential, Air France will not tolerate inappropriate or violent behavior towards its customers or staff.**

Any such behavior may result in denied boarding or even prosecution, depending on the severity of the case.

Together, let's promote courtesy.  
- Air France"

One Flight Attendant recently mused on social media a response she had dreamed of giving to a surly passenger:

To the passenger in row 23 on the delayed LAS-JFK flight on Sunday: When you snickered and asked me "Are YOU the late one we've been waiting for?" My answer to you is, "No, I'm not late. I'm actually EARLY by an entire day. You see today, Mother's Day is my day off. An hour ago my company called me at home and asked if I could work this redeye flight because a crew member had become ill. The full flight would have been grounded for hours or cancelled if a replacement could not be found. So before you make "joking" comments about us being late, know that I leave my family for days at a time to get you home, to a wedding, a funeral, meetings and vacations. I have had a friend suffer a miscarriage alone in a hotel room far away from her husband and

family, a dear friend pass away alone in his room overnight and another friend find a cancerous lump on her breast, alone in a random hotel shower. I personally have missed my children's birthdays, first steps, soccer games, dances, holidays to get you to where you need to be. I love my job and chose this as my career. I don't need you to thank me for being there or give me any special recognition, it's my job. I'm only asking you to please show me some respect and a little courtesy during our short journey together. I don't know what you're going thru and you don't know what I'm going thru but for the next few hours let's just be kind to one another. Thank you and enjoy the ride."

The reality is that the vast majority of passengers come to the plane with kindness in their hearts and a desire to have a peaceful, uneventful flight. And every day, Flight Attendants and Customer Service Agents help tens of thousands of flights and millions of passengers safely travel to their destination without incident. We need to promote: 'We are in this together.'

And that includes aviation policy, bi-lateral and Open Skies Agreements. We have worked hard to open the global aviation market to achieve greater reach and provide consumer choice. But competition is supposed to be fair. The globalization of aviation has opened the door to "creative" business plans that attempt to separate humanity from our people centric business. Cathay Pacific Flight Attendants based in the U.S. voted earlier this year to join the Association of Flight Attendants because the airline determined it could evade social security taxes for these U.S. citizens. This is unfair to the workers who lost this retirement, healthcare and disability safety net – and undercuts a level playing field of competition between Cathay and U.S. airlines. In opposition to the purpose of Article 17 Bis of the U.S./EU Open Skies Agreement, Norwegian introduced a flag of convenience model to aviation, utilizing a hiring company to staff its flight deck and cabin. The airline argued that U.S. based Flight Attendants were not employees of the airline and therefore didn't have the right to organize under U.S. law. This was rejected by the National Mediation Board and now these Flight Attendants are AFA members negotiating a contract that should include a scope clause with job security Norwegian claims it intends to provide in the U.S. In hopes of a new relationship that garners this result we are seeking to make that true, but we cannot allow other airlines to follow suit and take jobs to countries with the lowest labor standards. That's why our union is working hard to promote H.R. 2150, The Flags of Convenience Don't Fly Here Act. We cannot allow aviation to be separated from the people who make it fly – the people who have shaped the safest transportation system in the world and the people who have been at the forefront of achieving equal rights, workers' right, healthier aircraft cabins and millions of good jobs.

When I met with Secretary Chao a few weeks ago she had many questions, but closed with just one. What is your biggest concern? My immediate response was: Enforcing Open Skies Agreements.

Gulf carriers are breaking the rules to take our routes and threaten our jobs. Over \$50 billion in subsidies artificially prop up Emirates, Etihad, and Qatar to choke out U.S.

competition. Employees and consumers will shoulder the burden of unfair competition unless our government enforces Open Skies agreements with the Gulf states.

Middle East carriers are looking at the lucrative U.S. market to help build their airlines. Their collective goal is to dominate international aviation and they are well on their way. New flights do not represent increased passenger growth. They siphon flyers from U.S. carriers, from the U.S. to India and Asia. Billions in subsidies are what makes that possible; without it they could not compete with U.S. carriers.

For every international long-haul flight lost to the Gulf carriers, economists now estimate over 1,500 American jobs are lost. We have seen this happen at United Airlines, where flight attendants already have lost flights to the Gulf carriers due to these enormous subsidies. United successfully operated the Dulles-Dubai flight for seven years. But on January 25, 2016, the flight ceased to operate, nearly 200 flight attendant bid positions gone with it.

These Gulf carriers have used their subsidies to dump massive amounts of capacity across the globe, causing substantial harm to carriers in Europe, Australia and Asia. Gulf carriers grew capacity at more than six times the growth rate in global GDP between 2001-2016.

More than half of U.S. carriers' long haul international passengers connect to/from a domestic flight at the U.S. carrier hub. As a result, discontinued/forgone long-haul international service has a negative spillover effect on U.S. carriers' domestic services, including the potential loss of service to smaller communities.

Even though UAE and Qatar have a combined population comparable to that of South Carolina, they have firm orders for over 500 new widebody aircraft. This is more than twice the number of widebodies on order by the U.S. and Chinese carriers combined.

Everyone understands the rules of fair competition. As an Olympic medalist, if you are found guilty of supplementing your performance with steroids, you must give the medal back. It's that simple. And you don't get to retaliate in any fashion or you have to answer to the rest of the Olympic community. Gulf carriers need to play by the rules or be denied further access to the United States.

Look at the focus on aviation. It is a fascinating topic for the public and garners more publicity than almost any other industry. Our airlines, the crews and passengers fly to every corner of the earth when some can only dream of crossing borders. It is one of our greatest symbols and expressions of freedom. U.S. aviation alone generates 1.2 trillion dollars in economic activity and supports 10 million jobs. And for these reasons it continues to be the target of those who wage a war against the United States and the very idea of a free world. We cannot afford to get this wrong. We cannot afford to dismiss safety, security and the humanity of aviation. We are in this together.

Thank you.