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# Southwest Airlines CEO Responds to Allegations of Maintenance 'Missteps'

## Southwest Airlines maintains 37-year safety record

DALLAS, March 7 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly appeared on CNN's "This Morning" to address the penalty proposed by the FAA for what it calls "failed compliance" of certain FAA directives that Southwest rectified in April 2007. The directives involved one of many routine, redundant, and overlapping inspections on 46 of Southwest's more than 500 aircraft. Excerpts from Kelly's interview are below. To view the complete CNN story, please copy and paste the following URL into your browser:

<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2008/03/07/intv.gary.kelly.roberts.cnn?ire>

f=videosearch.

Gary Kelly:

"We've got a 37-year history of very safe operations, one of the safest operations in the world, and we're safer today than we've ever been. In this particular situation, we identified a gap in our documentation. We voluntarily reported that to the FAA. We worked out with the FAA how to fix that problem, and we fixed it.

We were surprised yesterday to get that notification (of a proposed penalty) by the FAA as well. The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday that as late as last month the FAA said that it had no safety issues with Southwest Airlines. So, I've ordered an investigation as to exactly what happened with this event. It occurred in March of 2007. These aircraft are inspected inch by inch, and in this particular incident over 99 percent of the inspections were completed according to the documentation. When we discovered the error, we went back and re-inspected those aircraft, and we did that in a matter of 10 days.

We've called in, as part of our review of this situation, outside experts. And Boeing issued a release yesterday saying that Southwest Airlines acted responsibly and at no time were the aircraft operated in an unsafe manner.

There were 46 aircraft that needed to be reinspected. We found cracks on roughly half a dozen of those aircraft. They were repaired properly. With respect to those cracks -- the expert -- the Boeing Company said that at no time were those cracks unsafe. Cracks do occur, and that's why we do inspections. We do inspections on those airplanes roughly every year and a half. When we found them, we corrected them.

Again, our interpretation of the guidance that we got from the FAA at the time was that we were in compliance with all laws and regulations. I think the FAA has a different view of that today. That's something that we're investigating as well, but the important point is that at no time were we operating in an unsafe manner, and I think our history proves that.

I think what we've got with the United States of America is the safest aviation system in the world.

Of course, we completely agree that our airplanes need to be well maintained, and I think any expert will tell you that the Southwest Airlines aircraft are the best maintained in the business. So in this particular case, there was not a safety issue because the problem was found. It was voluntarily disclosed. The fix was agreed upon with the FAA, and it was executed properly.

We're disappointed, obviously, with the fine. It is unprecedented, and we think it is unfair. So we are in the midst of doing the investigation that I mentioned, and we will be preparing our case.

We have an unprecedented 37-year history at Southwest Airlines. And our Employees, I am very, very proud of. They are proud of what they do at Southwest Airlines. Our number one priority, number one priority is to operate a safe airline, and then also provide outstanding customer service, and that's what we've done, and that's what we'll continue to do."

<http://www.southwest.com>

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