

2008: Airlines supervision

■ 6-3-2008: the facts

● in 2007

- Southwest disclosed to the FAA that 46 jets **missed airworthiness** inspections,
- But did not immediately ground the jets;
- An FAA supervisor appeared to **have known** Southwest did not stop flying after indicating that they would.

● In 2008

- The carrier continued to operate the same aircrafts for **8 days** after discovering last March that it missed the inspection deadline.

2008: Airlines supervision (con'd)

- 6-3-2008: the regulatory response
 - Southwest may be **fined** by U.S. regulators seeking a penalty for failing to properly to inspect more than 40 older planes for structural cracks.
 - The FAA proposed a record \$10.2 million fine on Southwest
 - The inspection program was part of an industry-wide FAA initiative to examine older planes more closely for signs of structural fatigue between June 2006 and March 2007.

2008: Airlines supervision (con'd)

- 6-3-2008: the regulatory role questioned...
 - U.S. Department of Transportation and a congressional committee examined **why**:
 - The FAA did not ground the planes last March after learning of the missed inspections.
 - The FAA supervisor who oversaw Southwest's maintenance, gave tacit permission to keep flying the jets.
 - Questions were raised about the FAA's **role** and whether its **oversight** was insufficient.
 - Congressional lawmakers asked **why** it took the FAA so long to act.

2008: Airlines supervision (con'd)

- 7-3-2008: the regulatory explanations (FAA):
 - Southwest continued to fly **uninspected** aircraft even after the carrier notified the agency that it had missed a mandatory deadline to complete the work.
 - There were **no** safety incidents related to the missed inspections of B737
 - **Cracks** were found on six planes after the inspections were completed.
 - The FAA will send a team of inspectors -- those that do not normally work closely with Southwest -- to **review** the maintenance program.

2008: Airlines supervision (con'd)

- 12-3-2008: the regulatory role **questioned**...
 - Lawmakers and others say the close ties went too far.
 - A congressional committee insists the FAA has gotten (too) cozy with carriers.
 - FAA inspectors overseeing US carriers said they were **removed** from their jobs after trying to investigate serious maintenance problems...

2008: Airlines supervision (con'd)

- 12-3-2008: the regulatory role questioned... (end)
 - Recently, FAA inspectors overseeing Southwest and Northwest said they were removed from their jobs after trying to investigate serious maintenance problems.
 - The inspector general's investigation largely backed up the inspector's claim that Northwest's mechanics were not properly trained and that efforts to sanction the carrier were thwarted by FAA managers.
 - Inspectors in the office overseeing American Airlines have made similar complaints about their efforts to oversee American

2008: Airlines supervision (con'd)

- 17-3-2006 : Regulatory agency past (re)surfaced...
 - The tragic ValuJet crash (1996), nearly 12 years ago:
 - Forced regulators to re-evaluate their approach to airline safety.
 - The FAA took blame for going easy on airlines in order to promote commercial aviation.
 - The FAA was faulted for poor oversight of ValuJet, an airline that grew quickly and out sourced most of its maintenance.
 - The agency admitted that it did not have enough inspectors to monitor the airline.
 - Chalk Ocean crash (2006)
 - The FAA's maintenance oversight was also an issue
 - The operator, Chalk's Ocean Airways, repeatedly fixed a fuel leak but missed the structural weakness that caused a wing to fall off.

2008: Airlines supervision (end)

- 23-07-2008:
 - The House has passed legislation aimed at preventing the FAA from having too warm of a relationship with the airline industry....