

Mr. Mayor and City Council Members,

While I was out of town recently for my brother's funeral, I called home on April 1 to check on my 82 year old husband who is being treated for cancer. He told me that he had been awakened around Midnight by air planes flying directly over our home, one right after the other – it seemed like a continuous roar that lasted for hours. The larger planes, which have a harder time gaining altitude, are extremely disturbing. I wonder how many other people with serious illnesses have had their rest disturbed, both day and night, by airplane traffic? Even those who are well need their rest.

We have been impacted every day and night since the “right turn” was implemented. We cannot have windows open at any time because the roar of airplanes is so great. We can no longer enjoy sitting outside on our porch for the same reason. We cannot carry on a conversation out doors and barely so indoors. We have spent over \$3000 for new windows to reduce the noise indoors, but the reduction was small. The quality of our lives and perhaps the length of our lives has been greatly reduced.

Our lives may be shortened by exhaust fumes from hundreds of airplanes flying at low altitudes, which poison our atmosphere and the air we breathe; yet the FAA has failed to consider environmental impact.

The relatively small amount of money that City Council has set aside to fight the decisions of the FAA is money well spent. If it only accomplishes some reduction in the impact that the right turn is having, it will be worth it. Please do not be intimidated by the FAA bullies or those few citizens who, for reasons of their own, do not want the City to pursue this law suit. Do not allow anyone to pit one part of the City against another part. We are all residents of the same City and we all should help any part of the City that is being mistreated. All citizens are entitled to a good quality of life and a safe environment regardless of where they live.

The FAA is a juggernaut rolling over the lives of thousands of people. It is a Renegade organization that has declared Eminent Domain over our airspace and has been violating its own regulations all over the Country. However, at the Orange County airport, planes are forbidden to take off or land from 10:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m.

I call to your attention a front-page article about the FAA that appeared in last weekend's edition of U.S.A.Today. The FAA has been warned by its own internal Traffic Safety Oversight Service to stop “This ongoing lack of compliance with FAA regulations....” In that case, it is the practice of landing airplanes in tandem, one over another, in order to increase efficiency. An air traffic manager is quoted as saying that these procedures are used “because it helps (airlines) make money.” Yet those procedures are not in compliance with FAA regulations. Will this eventually be a practice introduced in Las Vegas to increase efficiency, i.e. profit, for the airlines? What's next? The Airline Pilots Association says, “We are placing profit over safety.”

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The Airline Pilots Association, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, the controllers' union, and the FAA's own internal Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service all say that these violations by the FAA must stop, but the air traffic division has ignored everyone in spite of many, many close calls. The FAA cannot be trusted to act in the public's interest.

With all of the corruption we have seen the past two years, I wonder if we need an investigation into the affairs of those who have jammed this "right turn" down our throats and those who support them. To begin an investigation, we need only ask, "Who benefits from this?"

The FAA says that it needs the right turn to "increase efficiency." Does it mean that there will be even more planes overhead at all hours? Is there any limit on what the FAA can do? Will our skies eventually look like the skies over the English Channel on D-Day? Or, does it mean more profitability for the airline corporations?

Does that mean that my quality of life and the safety of airline passengers will pay for the profitability of the airlines? Should my quality of life pay for the profitability of the Casinos that want more and more tourists to fill more and more hotel rooms. Should my quality of life pay for the profitability of the construction companies who build the hotel rooms? Growth does not pay for itself – never has never will. Growth costs all of us as we have to provide police and fire protection for all those tourists and new employees hired to serve the tourists. It does not take an MBA to know that increased sales does not necessarily mean increased profitability. Maybe it is time for hotel and airline executives to learn to be profitable without incessant growth.

I am not anti-casino or hotel. I recognize that the gaming industry is the big base in this city and county. I do not even begrudge them the low tax rate they pay, compared to the tax rates they pay in other states. But people should not be expendable so the gaming industry can be profitable.

However, we do need to diversify our economy. How can we attract companies to move here or be created here if we do not also provide a good quality of life for their executives and employees? Good quality of life also means good schools and health care, but for today, we say we need to be able to sleep at night, to be able to be comfortable in our back yards, and not be bombarded with the roar of airplanes right over head.

I urge you, members of City Council to continue to defend the citizens of Las Vegas against the profit-driven ravages of the FAA.

Thank you for your attention.

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FAA split on close calls at runways

Safety division's order is ignored

By Alan Levin
USA TODAY

A controversial air-traffic procedure has nearly caused midair collisions during takeoffs and landings around the nation and brought a stern warning from U.S. safety investigators, who this month ordered the practice halted at Memphis International Airport, according to federal records, controllers and pilots.

Passenger jets arriving at Memphis and several other airports routinely fly directly over the top of planes landing on another nearby runway. Earlier this year, a midair collision between a Northwest Airlines DC-9 and a commuter plane was narrowly averted in Memphis, according to a report on the incident.

The issue offers a rare glimpse into the steps aviation officials take to increase capacity at airports and the debates that arise over safety.

Dangerous configurations where planes travel on crossing runways or nearby runways with intersecting flight paths can also be found at other airports, such as Minneapolis-St. Paul, Las Vegas and Philadelphia, said Capt. Larry Newman, chairman of the Air Line Pilots Association's air-traffic group.

Close calls in Memphis have prompted a pitched battle within the FAA. The agency's Air Traffic Safety Oversight Service, an independent investigative arm, demanded in an April 2 memo that Memphis managers stop the practice: "This ongoing lack of compliance with FAA regulations ... is unacceptable."

But the agency's air-traffic division has ignored the demand.

FAA spokeswoman Laura Brown would not comment on the internal dispute. She said the FAA is working to address safety concerns.

Memphis, which had nearly 200,000 departures carrying 5.6 million passengers in 2005, has had a series of close calls associated with landings on two nearby runways. One of the worst occurred Feb. 18 at 6:13 p.m., according to a report by Peter Nesbitt, an officer with the Memphis unit of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

A Northwest AirlinK Saab 340 was about to touch down when its pilots radioed the tower to say they were aborting their landing. At the same moment, a Northwest Airlines DC-9 approaching another runway was headed for the Saab.

A controller ordered the Saab's pilots. "Stay low, stay low!" said the report. The controller then told the DC-9 to climb. It flew over the commuter plane.

"Only some luck and the quick action by the ... controller prevented a midair collision from taking place," the report said.

Pete Sufka, who heads the controllers' union in Memphis, said controllers can't always prevent accidents in similar circumstances.

"I don't want any of my controllers getting in trouble running an operation that one part of the FAA says they shouldn't be operating," Sufka said. "All of these planes have people aboard, and we want them to come down in one piece. That is our job."

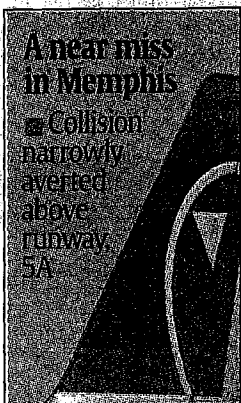
The Memphis procedure and others like it around the country allow more flights than if controllers had to keep planes farther apart. In Nesbitt's report, he said an air-traffic manager insisted on using the procedure "because it helps (airlines) make money."

Nesbitt concluded, "We are placing profit over safety against the objections of many controllers who are forced to deal with this unsafe situation."

Newman said pressure to move aircraft is compromising safety. "The way we see it, there are cracks in the system," he said. "There is a tremendous push to increase capacity."

A near miss in Memphis

Collision narrowly averted above runway 5A



Reuters

Air safety threat

Federal agency says scheduling problems persist, fatigue plagues air traffic controllers

Federal transportation safety officials say sleep-starved air traffic controllers have played a role in many near-fatal or fatal accidents on the nation's runways, including a crash last summer on a Kentucky runway that resulted in 49 deaths — the worst U.S. aviation crash in five years.

In an 11-page safety recommendation letter issued Tuesday, the National Transportation Safety Board said it "has long been concerned about the effects of fatigue" on transportation industry employees, including air traffic controllers.

Fatigue came to the forefront in tragic form Aug. 27 when Comair flight 5191 crashed while taking off from Blue Grass Airport in Lexington, Ky., killing 49 of the 50 people on board. The sole air traffic controller on

duty had cleared the aircraft for takeoff on a 7,003-foot runway, but failed to notice that the aircraft mistakenly was headed for an unlighted runway half as long.

The plane ran off the runway, hitting an airport boundary fence and trees.

Initial reports said the controller lost track of Comair Flight 5191 because he was tending to paperwork after clearing the aircraft for takeoff. The controller also told investigators that "his only sleep in the 24 hours before the accident was a two-hour nap the previous afternoon" between his two eight-hour shifts, the NTSB reports.

The Federal Aviation Administration, which is in charge of controllers and aviation regulation, "does not consider the potential impact of work

scheduling on fatigue and performance," the NTSB says.

A National Air Traffic Controllers Association spokesman told USA Today that fatigue is the No. 1 problem among controllers and that the "FAA is stretching the ranks too thin."

The FAA has conducted "a great deal of research" on fatigue that has resulted in a better understanding of its causes, but it "has been slow to change controller-scheduling practices," the NTSB says.

The NTSB has pushed for better fatigue control policies since 1989. It is unconscionable that the FAA has not improved its scheduling of air traffic controllers, potentially placing controllers who are too sleepy to perform their duties in the position of making life-and-death decisions.