

Near-miss at UPS's Worldport, site of deadly crash last November, part of worsening aviation safety crisis

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On April 14, a collision was narrowly avoided between a cargo jet and a smaller aircraft on approach to Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport in Louisville, Kentucky. The 767 cargo jet had to abort its landing when another aircraft moved onto the runway, forcing a go-around at one of the busiest freight hubs in the country.

The airport hosts UPS's Worldport hub, the center of its air operations and one of the biggest logistics hubs in the country. The same facility was the site of the fatal crash of UPS Airlines Flight 2976 last November which killed 15 people, including three pilots. The plane crashed shortly after takeoff into a dense industrial corridor, which includes a Ford assembly plant, creating a debris field a mile long.

The National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) preliminary findings showed that the left engine and pylon separated during takeoff, with fatigue cracks and overstress failures in the attachment structure. Evidence so far indicates that maintenance of the 34-year-old MD-11F freighter was inconsistent at best. The plane had been in San Antonio from September 3 to October 18 for a heavy maintenance check, and investigators said they would examine every maintenance action performed before the crash.

UPS has since retired its entire MD-11 fleet.

The NTSB has now scheduled a two-day investigative, public hearing for May 19–20, to gather sworn public testimony and evidence to help the NTSB determine the circumstances and probable cause of the crash.

The latest near-disaster at Worldport is the latest sign of a serious crisis in US aviation safety. On March 22 at LaGuardia Airport in New York City, an Air Canada

Express CRJ-900 struck a fire truck on landing, killing the two pilots. Only two controllers were in the tower overnight, and the fire rescue truck on the runway lacked a transponder and could not be reliably tracked by the airport's surface detection system.

On April 18, four days after the near miss in Louisville, two Southwest aircraft came perilously close at Nashville International Airport in Tennessee. One Southwest aircraft was executing a go-around while another was departing from a parallel runway, creating a near miss that investigators are still reviewing.

The ruling class's relentless drive for profit has led to the dangerous neglect of maintenance and technology in the National Airspace System (NAS). More than 90 percent of US air traffic control facilities operate below recommended levels, forcing controllers into 10-hour shifts and six-day weeks.

While billions of dollars are being spent on domestic repression and imperialist wars, air traffic control systems are forced to rely on antiquated equipment and a technological patchwork. Conditions for controllers have worsened for decades since the Reagan administration smashed the PATCO strike in 1981 by firing over 11,000 air traffic controllers.

Significantly, the November UPS crash took place during a federal shutdown, in which controllers spent more than a month working without pay.

On March 6, Trump fired NTSB board member J. Todd Inman, undermining the independent investigatory powers of the agency. Inman had played a key role in the investigations of the November and the midair collision of a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter and an American Airlines flight over Washington D.C.

in January 2025, which killed all 67 people aboard both aircraft. Inman has said he was removed without explanation. White House cited misconduct allegations, which Inman has denied.

Inman is the second NTSB board member fired by Trump in less than a year. NTSB Vice Chair Alvin Brown was fired last May.

In his drive to establish a presidential dictatorship, Trump fired 17 independent inspectors general across departments like DHS, State and Defense during his first week in office. He has since dismissed dozens of independent agency leaders and either appointed loyalists or left seats vacant.

The Democrats provide no meaningful opposition to the Trump administration's dismantling of safety oversight and regulations. They fundamentally agree with Trump on the defense of the capitalist system and continue to fund the administration's regressive policies, pouring billions of dollars into ICE and CBP for immigrant detention and deportation camps, while bankrolling endless imperialist wars abroad.



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