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TRANSPORTATION
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CHAIRMAN,
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TRANSPORTATION

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3002

April 17, 2013

ARMED SERVICES

TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

READINESS

HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT
COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

TERRORISM, HUMINT, ANALYSIS AND
COUNTERINTELLIGENCE (THACI)

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On Monday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) signed an agreement with the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to open a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Preclearance facility at Abu Dhabi International Airport. I respectfully ask that you immediately petition DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano to oppose this agreement and any similar agreements under consideration, which will undermine the economic viability and global competitiveness of the U.S. airline industry and its employees.

Unlike the 15 existing CBP preclearance facilities, no U.S. airline currently serves Abu Dhabi – the global hub for UAE government-owned Etihad Airways, which competes with U.S. carriers on many profitable routes between the Middle East and United States. With a preclearance facility at Abu Dhabi funded primarily by that government, Etihad will have a competitive advantage over U.S. network airlines by enabling international passengers who are seeking to fly to the U.S. from other points in the Middle East, Near East and South Asia to avoid the unacceptably long customs lines at domestic points of entry. In addition, since a portion of the operating costs of the facility will be partially funded by U.S. taxpayers, this agreement and others like it will exacerbate the CBP staffing shortage at U.S. airports, a long-standing problem.

Our nation's airlines already are having difficulty competing with Etihad and other sovereign-owned airlines in the Middle East, including Emirates Airlines and Qatar Airways, which receive direct and indirect support from their respective governments. The ability of U.S. airlines to compete on a level playing field with Etihad and other foreign airlines is critical to ensuring their global competitiveness and economic viability. The higher yields on such international traffic enables U.S. airlines to provide service to less profitable small and medium size communities, purchase new aircraft and other capital equipment, and create new high-paying U.S. airline and aerospace jobs.

In light of your statutory obligation to "eliminat[e] discrimination and unfair competitive practices faced by United States airlines in foreign air transportation ..." and "strength[en] the competitive position of air carriers to ensure at least equality with foreign air carriers ...", I hope you will consider relaying to Secretary Napolitano that this agreement will harm a critical U.S. industry that has lost over \$50 billion and approximately one-third of its workforce over the last decade. I also request that you provide a detailed response on how you plan to fulfill your statutory obligation to this Congress and the American people with respect to CBP's planned preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi, as well as any similar agreements under consideration by DHS.

Sincerely,

Frank A. LoBiondo
Member of Congress

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