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15TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

AGRICULTURE
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES
AND RISK MANAGEMENT

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
AVIATION
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SCIENCE
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ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY,
AND STANDARDS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1315

XRFAA-650715-013

September 22, 2005

Ms. Marion C. Blakey, Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Blakey:

I am writing on the recent news that the FAA has decided to do a formal investigation into the safety of the Mitsubishi MU-2 aircraft. [REDACTED] a constituent of mine has brought this information to my attention.

[REDACTED] and his three siblings have great concerns with the safety of this aircraft. [REDACTED] parents were killed on June 10, 2001 when a Mitsubishi MU-2 crashed on approach to the destination airport. I have enclosed the information that [REDACTED] provided to my office for your review. I believe this information could be useful in doing a complete investigation into the Mitsubishi MU-2 crashes and the overall safety of this aircraft.

With our primary goal to provide the safest air transportation in the world, I would request that you provide me with a detailed update on the evaluation of this aircraft and the finding of the pending investigation, upon completion. Please provide corresponds to my Champaign District Office at 2004 Fox Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Tim V. Johnson
Member of Congress

CC: David Balloff, Assistant Administrators for Government and Industry Affairs,
FAA

- REPLY TO:
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September 1, 2005

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Honorable Timothy Johnson
2004 Fox Drive
Champaign, IL 61820

Dear Honorable Timothy Johnson,

My name is [REDACTED] and I write to you on behalf of myself and three older siblings. Our parents, [REDACTED] were long-time residents of [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and were killed in a Mitsubishi MU-2B-20 plane crash on June 10, 2001. The Mitsubishi MU-2B model aircraft has a disturbing crash history, and has been crashing frequently and a rate that far exceeds like models on the market. Four fatal crashes in 2004 and three fatal crashes in 2005 speak to the present importance and seriousness of the issue. Colorado Congressmen recently formed a delegation and called upon the FAA to investigate the aircraft and consider grounding the plane. I have included information about the Mitsubishi MU-2 in this letter, and I ask you to consider the aircraft's crash history, the deaths of Illinois residents, and the deadly risks that MU-2 pilots continue to undertake. It is my hope that once you have been presented with factual information about this deadly plane, you will feel compelled to join with the Colorado Congressmen and help save lives.

My father was an orthodontist and had practices in Peoria, LaSalle, Canton, Washington, Princeton, Pekin, and Peru (Peoria County, LaSalle County, Woodford County, Bureau County, and Tazewell County). He served on the Central Illinois Cleff Palette Board, a group of doctors who provided volunteer care for children with cleff palettes. He also was a land developer and created three subdivisions in Germantown Hills, Illinois: White Oak Lake, Cherry Ridge, and Coventry Farms. My mother was a writer who had recently earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in writing. She had just begun to receive national attention for her writing, and was being published in highly respected literary journals just before her death. Earlier in her career, she wrote a monthly column for the *Peoria Woman* magazine. She served as President of the Father Sweeney Grade School Board and served on the Peoria Notre Dame High School Board. My parents were respected and contributing members of their community, and the city of Peoria continues to feel the impact of their deaths.

My family was not aware of the MU-2's dangerous history until after our parents' deaths. Many people have been killed recently by the MU-2: the governor of South Dakota, a state senator from New Jersey, Coca-Cola executives, the owners of and a research doctor for the Southern California Imperial Valley Cancer Center, experienced cargo pilots, an army helicopter pilot/deputy sheriff, a Royal Rosarian, a software company entrepreneur, several children, and among many others, my parents. Now they are included in the 33 dead in the last 15 fatal crashes that have occurred since 2000.

The Mitsubishi MU-2B has been crashing with an alarming and now predictable frequency. The rate at which the original fleet of Mitsubishi MU-2s is reducing itself due to major accidents is at a rate far greater than any like-model on the market today. On the next page you will find a detailed five-year history of fatal Mitsubishi MU-2 air crashes and a table summarizing the yearly rates of similar aircraft fleet reduction due to major accidents.

Fatal Mitsubishi MU-2 Crashes From Years 2000 – 2005

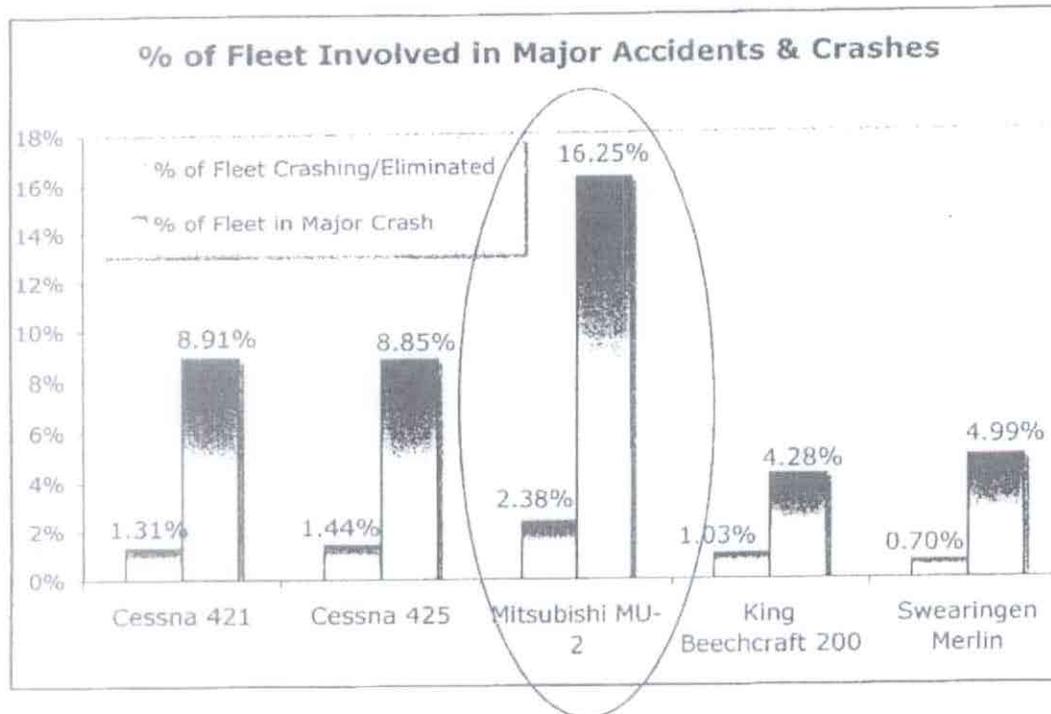
Date	Crash Location	Number of Fatalities	Mitsubishi Model	Crash Circumstances	Victims
8/4/2005	Englewood, CO	1	Mitsubishi MU 2B-60	Crashed on approach to destination airport	[REDACTED] (American Check Transport)
5/24/2005	Hillsboro, OR	4	Mitsubishi MU 2B-25	Engine failure on take-off	[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (Royal Rosarians of Portland's Rose Festival)
4/14/2005	Nigata, Japan	4	Mitsubishi MU 2	Information unavailable	Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) - [REDACTED]
12/10/2004	Englewood, CO	2	Mitsubishi MU 2B-60	Engine failure on take-off	[REDACTED] (American Check Transport)
5/14/2004	Ferndale, MD	1	Mitsubishi MU 2B-40	Crashed on approach to destination airport	[REDACTED] (Epps Aviation Cargo Pilot, Federal Reserve Checks)
3/25/2004	Pittsfield, MA	1	Mitsubishi MU 2B-35	Plane experienced troubles at high altitude mid-flight and was unable to recover	[REDACTED] Royal Air Freight Cargo Service, carrying screws)
3/11/2004	Napa, CA	2	Mitsubishi MU 2B-40	Crashed on approach to destination airport	[REDACTED] & dog Teddi (Imperial Valley Cancer Center, Doctor & Researcher)
7/1/2003	Belém, Brazil	4	Mitsubishi MU 2B-35	Crashed on approach to destination airport	Heringer Taxi Aéreo
4/15/2002	Carolina, Puerto Rico	2	Mitsubishi MU 2B-35	Crashed while circling destination airport	Maxfly Aviation
8/1/2001	Hilton Head, SC	1	Mitsubishi MU 2B-35	Crash related to mechanical flap problems on approach to destination airport	[REDACTED] (an Army helicopter pilot/deputy sheriff working for Bankair Inc.)
6/10/2001	Cerillos, NM	2	Mitsubishi MU 2B-20	Crashed on approach to destination airport	[REDACTED] (Orthodontist, Land-Developer, and Writer)
5/1/2001	The Woodlands, TX	2	Mitsubishi MU 2B-40	80 gallon wing-tip tank broke off minutes after take-off	[REDACTED] (local business owners)
10/6/2000	Edgartown, MA	4	Mitsubishi MU 2B-26A	Crashed on approach to destination airport	[REDACTED] his wife, and 2 children (State Senator from New Jersey)
2/11/2000	Lewiston, ID	1	Mitsubishi MU 2B-35	Dual-engine flame-out on approach to destination airport	American Check Transport
1/22/2000	San Antonio, TX	2	Mitsubishi MU 2B-26A	Engine failure on take-off	[REDACTED] Floreat- computer software owner/entrepreneur)

The following information was gathered from the Aircraft Crash Records Office in Geneva, Switzerland and this data can be easily accessed at <http://www.baaa-acro.com/>. The site includes not only the MU-2 crashes in the United States, but also crashes that have occurred in Japan, South America, Europe, and Australia. The available information, however, is unclear as to the exact number of MU-2s flying in 2000. While a fatal and major accident ends the usability of the aircraft, many other MU-2s have also been retired; thus, other sources of information indicate that only 500 MU-2s were flying in 2000.

These conservative estimates show the MU-2 fleet reducing two or even three times as fast as other comparable planes. Further, if there were in fact only 500 MU-2s operating in 2000, then the statistical crash history is even worse.

	Cessna 421	Cessna 425	Mitsubishi MU-2 Marquise & Solitaire	King Beechcraft 200	Swearingen Merlin
Total Number in the Fleet	1909	226	831	2404	901
Total Number of Major Accidents	170	20	135	103	45
Number of Planes Theoretically Operating in 2000	1762	209	713	2325	862
Number of Major Accidents in the Last 5 Years	23	3	17	24	6
Number of Major & Fatal Accidents in Last 5 Years	20	2	15	17	4
Percentage of Fleet Involved in Major Accident	8.91%	8.85%	16.25%	4.28%	4.99%
Percentage of Fleet Crashing/Eliminating from 2000- 2005	1.31%	1.44%	2.38%	1.03%	0.70%
Average Percentage Per Year (Computed using a 5.5 Year Period)	0.24%	0.26%	0.43%	0.19%	0.13%

* The Swiss website categorizes the MU-2 in two different ways: the "Solitaire" (which has a standard fuselage) and the "Marquise" (which has a stretched fuselage) series. The MU-2B is the most common model and features a standard fuselage.



As evidenced by the above chart, the frequency with which the MU-2 crashes is far worse than these similar twin-engine turbo-prop aircrafts.

Problems with the MU-2 are not limited to the past five years. In 1993, Governor George Mickelson of South Dakota died in a MU-2B-60 when a blade on the left propeller broke off mid-flight causing the plane to crash. Following the National Travel Safety Bureau's ("NTSB") investigation of the crash, the Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") issued Airworthiness Directives ("AD") AD 93-09-04 and AD 93-12-01 which called for every MU-2B's propeller hub to be inspected for cracks. The FAA took into account a similar non-fatal MU-2B-60 crash in Utica, New York where a propeller blade also broke off mid-flight on September 27, 1991. Following the deaths of Coca-Cola executives in Malad City, Idaho, on January 15, 1996, the FAA made recommendations regarding seat heaters and the icing system of the plane. In the midst of ten fatal Mitsubishi MU-2 crashes in 1981 alone, the FAA conducted an investigation of this deadly plane, but classified the outcome.

On March 24, 1983, a cargo pilot, his wife, and their two young children all died when the structure of their Mitsubishi MU-2B-60 broke apart and crashed mid-flight in Jeffersonville, Georgia. The NTSB speculated that that this crash might have been caused when the pilot attempted to recover from engine problems, resulting in an uncontrolled descent. The NTSB recognized that the MU-2 had been involved in many accidents, some of which included uncontrolled descents for unexplained reasons. As a result, the NTSB investigators in 1983 made the following observations and recommendations to the FAA:

Conduct a special certification review of Mitsubishi MU-2 airplanes relative to the engines, fuel system, autopilot, and flight control systems; flight in known icing conditions; engine inoperative characteristics; and handling characteristics during IMC [Instrument Meteorological Condition] landing approaches; and take the appropriate action to correct any deficiencies identified.

Interestingly, in a letter written by the Honorable Tom Tancredo of Colorado to Marion Blakey, the director of the FAA, on June 23, 2005, the NTSB's earlier findings were echoed when he stated "several MU-2B incidents involved propeller failures, while others involved what pilots described as a 'loss of power' or 'loss of torque.' Therefore, it may very well be that there is a much more insidious problem inherent in this aircraft—something having to do with fuel or air flow disruption to engines." Twenty years ago, the NTSB investigators were calling for an investigation into the MU-2. Sadly, answers are yet to be given, and countless people have lost their lives during the interim.

Mitsubishi and its supporting divisions are quick to blame pilots for the countless accidents – pilots need more training, Mitsubishi claims. But how much training is enough training? Bankair pilot [REDACTED] was both an army helicopter pilot and an experienced cargo pilot with 4,000 total flight hours, and he was killed while flying a MU-2. Cargo pilot [REDACTED] accumulated 2,000 MU-2 hours and an additional 4,500 flight hours in other aircraft, and he lost his life while flying a MU-2. Cargo pilot [REDACTED] who was killed while flying a MU-2B, had already earned 6,800 total flight hours and was part of an elite group of cargo pilots known as the "freight dogs." Earlier this year in another MU-2B crash, this time in Oregon, the pilot not only had 17,000 total flight hours, but he also had reportedly flown in three of four different Mitsubishi MU-2B planes since the early 1980s. Extensive experience and training did not save these elite pilots, and the unacceptable frequency of crashes will likely not be reduced by an "MU-2 certificate rating" or by requiring pilots to earn additional training hours.

Confronted with this indisputable data, Mitsubishi still claims that the MU-2 is a safe plane. In fact, Ralph Sorrells, the deputy general manager for the Mitsubishi aircraft product support division of Addison, Texas-based Mitsubishi Heavy Industries of America said, "I don't see any reason why the FAA would ever ground the plane."

History and the growing list of crash victims, however, refute Mitsubishi's claims of the MU-2B's safety. A safe aircraft does not have a repeated history of cracking propeller blades. A safe aircraft does not break apart mid-flight. A safe aircraft does not reduce its aircraft fleet at a rate far greater than its comparable models. And finally, a safe aircraft does not crash repeatedly and mysteriously time and time again. Investigators, politicians, and victims have been demanding a thorough investigation into the safety of the Mitsubishi MU-2 for the last 25 years. This plane is unsafe and poses a constant and predictable threat to users.

My family and I will be happy to assist you and your office in any way that we can. We hope that you will consider speaking with the Congressmen in Colorado and will consider joining the call to the FAA for a proper and unbiased investigation. The families of the victims demand an explanation for this aircraft's abysmal crash history. Pilots must be protected. And most importantly, the victims must receive justice.

I would be happy to speak with you at any time or share with you any additional resources, knowledge, or information I may have. My e-mail address is [REDACTED] and my telephone number is [REDACTED]. Feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you again for your time and your courage to stand up for what is right, protect hundreds of MU-2 pilots flying today, and demand an explanation for the high frequency of Mitsubishi MU-2B crashes.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]