

June 3, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

**PUBLIC VERSION**

**Re: XRIN 0694-XC127, Response to Request for Public Comments on Section 232 National Security Investigation of Imports of Commercial Aircraft and Jet Engines and Parts for Commercial Aircraft and Jet Engines**

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

On behalf of Delta Air Lines, Inc. (“Delta”), we hereby respond to the United States Department of Commerce’s (“Commerce”) request for public comment in connection with Commerce’s investigation of the effects on the national security of imports of commercial aircraft and jet engines, and parts for commercial aircraft and jet engines. (the “Investigation”).<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4) and 15 C.F.R. § 705.6(a)(2), Delta respectfully requests that Commerce treat as confidential the information bracketed (“[ ]”) in this submission because it contains business confidential information regarding investments, capacity, and production that, if disclosed, would cause substantial harm to the competitive position of Delta. Delta endorses the comments submitted by Airlines for America with regard to this Investigation.

Delta strongly supports this Administration’s commitment to safeguard our national and economic security with comprehensive efforts to promote increased American production, manufacturing capacity, and jobs. Delta is a world leader in aircraft and engine maintenance, repair, and overhauls and Delta has been at the forefront of building sophisticated manufacturing capacity with high-skill, high-pay jobs right here at home. Imposing tariffs on the free-flowing movement of aircraft, engines, and component parts, would hinder Delta’s ability to maintain its

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<sup>1</sup> See *Notice of Request for Public Comments on Section 232 National Security Investigation of Imports of Commercial Aircraft and Jet Engines and Parts for Commercial Aircraft and Jet Engines*, 90 Fed. Reg. 20,273 (May 13, 2025) (“Section 232 Investigation Initiation”).

current trajectory as the world leader. To give a sense of scale, in 2025 it is expected that [ ] total aircraft components will require repair by Delta, for its own operation and for a global roster of airline customers for Delta’s maintenance, repair, and overhaul (“MRO”) services. In 2024, Delta imported [ ] in aircraft parts alone (excluding the value of aircraft and engine imports). Of that [ ] Delta notes that a mere [ ] of the value came from [ ]. The majority of the value came from [ ]. If component parts incur tariffs upon entering the United States, Delta will be at a competitive disadvantage to foreign competitors. The services Delta provides that drive the need for highly skilled, highly paid, manufacturing jobs would be lost to foreign competitors who could obtain tariff-free components abroad. Additionally, such tariffs would result in supply shortages because U.S. manufacturing of component parts cannot be “turned-on” quickly, as the necessary certifications and regulatory approvals for new suppliers of aircraft, engines, and parts would take years. Tariffs threaten not only the loss of the industry-leading manufacturing work Delta does today, but also Delta’s ability to compete for contracts for sophisticated, next-generation manufacturing opportunities in the future. Any new tariffs would also hinder Delta’s ability to purchase aircraft and maintain a modern and efficient fleet that can be competitive in the global airline industry and reliably serve U.S. consumers.

Delta respectfully requests that Commerce carefully weigh the intended and unintended consequences of any recommendations and decline to recommend the adoption of any new tariffs. If Commerce does decide that tariffs are necessary, Delta asks that Commerce provide the aviation industry with sufficient time to adapt to any new measures without being penalized for aircraft and related supplies purchase agreements and MRO services agreements already negotiated and signed. Additionally, Delta would respectfully request that Commerce allow for a multi-year phase-in. Without a runway, potential tariffs or other measures would adversely and unilaterally impact U.S. interests and harm Delta’s operations, employees, and their communities across the United States and, as discussed below, would inadvertently work against this Administration’s goals of enhancing national and economic security.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Delta was founded one hundred years ago, in 1925, as a tiny crop-dusting operation in Macon, Georgia, and it is now one of the largest airlines in the world, employing more than 100,000 people located in almost every U.S. state. Delta and its alliance partners now offer services to over 800 destinations in more than 120 countries to more than 200 million travelers. Delta is consistently among the industry’s best performers, delivering the best on-time arrival among network carrier peers in 2024.<sup>2</sup>

Delta’s aircraft fleet and engines are essential to its business. As of May 1, 2025, Delta had 980 mainline large commercial aircraft (“LCA”) and 325 smaller regional jet aircraft in service, with an additional 283 aircraft on order pursuant to preexisting purchase agreements with both Boeing and Airbus. Maintaining the health of this fleet to provide award-winning services to consumers depends upon Delta’s leading MRO and related manufacturing operations that, in turn, rely upon the free-flowing access to aircraft, components, and parts. To this end, Delta has developed three business units—Delta Technical Operations (“TechOps”), Delta Flight Products (“DFP”), and Delta Material Services (“DMS”)—that focus on U.S. manufacturing operations. These units provide essential services that keep aircraft safely in the air across the United States and around the world, for Delta and on behalf of MRO customers around the globe. Over the last 50 years Delta has become the number one provider in the United States for these services and third in the world—behind only Lufthansa (#1) and Air France-KLM (#2).

Delta’s global leadership in the aviation industry is a direct result of the trade policy of low-to-zero reciprocal tariffs, implemented in 1980, under the Agreement on the Trade in Civil Aircraft (“Aircraft Agreement”).<sup>3</sup> The Aircraft Agreement facilitated the exponential growth of U.S. manufacturing of commercial aircraft, engines, and parts. U.S. leadership, robust competition, and predictability, all led to resilient supply chains that have fueled unprecedented growth, innovation, and customer experiences in the American civil aviation industry. The

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<sup>2</sup> *Wall Street Journal names Delta ‘Top U.S. Airline’ for the Fourth Consecutive Year*,” Wall Street Journal names Delta ‘Top U.S. Airline’ for the fourth consecutive year | Delta News Hub; *see also Delta Named Best U.S. Airline of 2023 by The Points Guy for 5<sup>th</sup> Year In A Row*, CBS NEWS (May 24, 2023), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/best-us-airlines-2023-the-points-guy/> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/delta-air-lines-rises-to-top-of-annual-u-s-airline-ranking/>.

<sup>3</sup> Since the 1980s, signatories to the Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft (“Aircraft Agreement”) agreed to eliminate tariffs on civil aircraft, engines, flight simulators, and related parts and components. There are 32 signatories to the Agreement, that include the European Union and China.

modern U.S. aviation industry is a testament to what can be achieved through long term American vision and leadership.

Commerce has initiated this Investigation to determine whether imports of aircraft, engines, and parts threaten national security and, therefore, need to be adjusted to encourage the manufacture of such goods domestically. Delta provides these comments not just as one of the largest U.S. purchasers of domestic and imported aviation goods, but also as a leading company that leverages access to this integrated supply chain to develop and expand manufacturing capabilities throughout the United States. Delta welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Administration to help find ways to continue this upward trajectory. Other industries and sectors might benefit from tariffs or quotas, however, the U.S. aviation industry would not. Tariffs and quotas would negatively impact our national and economic security and the United States' global leadership in the aviation industry.

## **II. CONTINUED GROWTH IN DELTA'S MANUFACTURING SERVICES AND JOBS DEPENDS ON TARIFF-FREE MOVEMENT OF ENGINES AND PARTS**

Delta has developed into the largest airline MRO provider in North America and a global leader in this arena. Currently, Delta maintains critical U.S. infrastructure and a brigade of highly skilled American engineers, mechanics, and innovators in the aviation industry that specialize in cutting-edge work with engines, components, hangars, aircraft, and related technologies. Delta also manufactures aircraft components and serves an integral role in the global marketplace of surplus aircraft parts. Delta's foothold in this important area of the airline industry that has the technical capacity to keep aircraft safely in the air took time, a significant investment in American workers, and the free movement of goods. Any additional tariffs on component parts entering the United States will result in the loss of highly skilled and highly paid manufacturing jobs and knowledge and growth opportunities to foreign competitors.

As discussed above, Delta developed three business units that provide MRO and manufacturing services. Through its TechOps, DFP, and DMS business units, Delta employs nearly [ ] and conducts critical airframe and engine overhauls and testing at state-of-the-art facilities located in the United States. TechOps currently serves [ ]. In addition to supplying maintenance and engineering support for Delta's large fleet of aircraft, Delta TechOps

provides high-quality service to more than 150 other aviation and airline customers around the world and has developed strategic partnerships for next-generation engines with Pratt & Whitney and Rolls-Royce.

Delta TechOps has always been a part of Delta, but the heavier, more complex work was once outsourced overseas. Over the last 20 years, Delta has worked to change that business model and bring that work home to the United States. For example, in 2015, Delta and Rolls-Royce signed a comprehensive agreement for Delta TechOps to become an authorized maintenance center for various models of Rolls-Royce Trent engines here in the United States. In 2019, Delta opened the world's largest commercial engine test cell in Atlanta to support TechOps maintenance capabilities for Rolls-Royce engines. Since then, Delta continues to increase its capabilities and can disassemble and replace critical components, such as High Pressure Turbine systems and blades, in Rolls-Royce's most technologically advanced engine models. That relationship, which relies on both U.S.-origin parts and imported parts, continues to grow. Currently, there are over [ ] technicians on Delta's U.S. team dedicated to the Rolls-Royce business alone. Delta's investment in its employees and infrastructure, as well as its cultivation of a culture of excellence brought this important manufacturing work to the United States.

Just a few years later, in 2017, Delta TechOps and Pratt & Whitney (a U.S. aircraft engine manufacturer) announced a partnership for Delta to join the Pratt network to conduct overhaul work in the United States for global customers. In 2018, Delta opened a 127,000 square feet dedicated engine maintenance facility in Atlanta, Georgia expanding Delta TechOps's ability to perform maintenance on advanced-technology engines here in the United States. In 2023, Delta opened a state-of-the-art Pratt & Whitney GTF Engine Shop at the Atlanta facility capable of conducting approximately 300 engine overhauls annually. Delta continues to expand its capabilities and recently announced an enhanced partnership with Pratt & Whitney to expand Delta's capacity to ultimately conduct over 450 engine overhauls annually.

Delta TechOps's customers go beyond world-leading engine manufacturers and includes the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. and non-U.S. commercial airlines, cargo airlines, and other government entities. Overall, Delta TechOps supports over 113 international customers in 39 different countries. These services result in the employment of American workers in over 30

maintenance stations across the United States and over 10 stations internationally. Delta TechOps works non-stop as a 24/7, three shift, operation. These maintenance stations drive economic activity throughout the United States by relying on parts and equipment produced in essential communities such as Cincinnati, Ohio, Phoenix, Arizona, Olathe, Kansas, Huntsville, Alabama, and McKinney, Arkansas. Delta's annual purchases from those locations alone is [ ].

Delta's success is in no small part due to its heavy investment in building a world-class team of highly skilled American manufacturing talent. Delta TechOps employees must complete rigorous training even prior to being hired by Delta. To walk in the door, an 18-24 month Airframe and Powerplant training program is required. Delta has partnerships with more than 50 Federal Aviation Administration-certified Airframe and Powerplant schools across the United States. Delta provides loan guarantees to students that result in extremely low interest rates. Once in the door, Delta provides aircraft specific or manufacturing process specific training that amounts to an average of an additional 120 hours of training per year per employee. The average mechanic tenure in Delta TechOps is 15 years.

Delta takes care of its employees, their families, and the communities in which they live. Delta TechOps has over 1,290 American employees that have stayed with Delta for 30 years or more. That amounts to nearly 40,000 years of collective working experience here in the United States that has developed in large part due to the ready availability of parts and equipment. In addition to excellent benefits and annual base pay increases, Delta directly shares its profits every year with its employees in the form of a bonus. In 2025, Delta employees received a bonus equal to 10 percent of their base pay. Over the last ten years Delta has shared approximately \$10 billion of its profits with its employees.

Delta's team of highly trained employees is uniquely poised to be a mission critical asset in the event of a national security event. In 1942, Delta contributed significantly to the war efforts by modifying 916 aircraft, overhauling over 1,000 engines and instruments, training the U.S. army mechanics, and maintaining aircraft flying cargo supply routes for the military. That commitment to national service continues today. Delta currently participates in the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program, that permits the U.S. military to use Delta's aircraft and crew

resources during airlift emergencies, national emergencies, or times of war.<sup>4</sup> Delta also has a Government Services team that fully supports military projects for domestic and foreign customers through engine inventory, component repair support, and more.<sup>5</sup>

Delta also serves as a resource and an employment pipeline for U.S. military personnel. Over the last five years, Delta has hired over 10,500 veterans and nearly 11 percent of Delta's over 100,000 employees are military veterans. Delta TechOps, alone, currently employs over 2,200 veterans. Delta invests significant resources in cultivating a strategic partnership with the U.S. Army, U.S. Army National Guard, and U.S. Army Reserve. Delta provides specifically tailored resources for veterans that help bridge the gap between military service and civilian employment and provide comprehensive services that support the longevity of their tenure with Delta. As a result of this investment by Delta, there is a brigade of employees with military experience and knowledge with highly honed skills in maintaining a fleet of aircraft safely in the air.

In addition to Delta TechOps, Delta has developed Delta Flight Products beginning in 2016. As a wholly owned subsidiary of Delta, DFP is a manufacturer of aircraft parts and components to outfit or modify commercial aircraft. These abilities improve the utility, reliability, and features of commercial aircraft. DFP employs over 200 people in Atlanta, Georgia, Irvine, California, and Seattle, Washington. Customers of DFP include not only Delta, but also WestJet (Canada), Air Canada (Canada), and China Eastern (China). The parts and materials for DFP's operations are sourced domestically and globally.

Delta Material Services was also founded by Delta in 2016, and is uniquely positioned in the global marketplace as a supplier and consumer of surplus aircraft parts. Delta's current competitive advantage includes a global alliance partner network that leverages the aviation surplus materials market to deliver assets to both foreign and domestic airlines. Delta's customers include Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier Airframe Equipment, Pratt & Whitney, General Electric, and CFM Engines—80 percent of which are based in the United States. Delta ships

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<sup>4</sup> Delta was called to service as recently as 2021 to support the military's effort to evacuate people from Afghanistan following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country.

<sup>5</sup> *Delta TechOps Services More Than Just Commercial Fleets*, <https://deltatechops.com/military/>.

these surplus parts mostly to locations in the United States, but also exports these parts to over 20 foreign locations.

### **III. TARIFFS ON AIRCRAFT WOULD HARM U.S. MANUFACTURING**

If Commerce were to recommend tariffs under Section 232, the action would also impose an unexpected tax on Delta's purchases of aircraft contracted years in advance. Delta would likely be forced to cancel existing contracts and reconsider contracts under negotiation. The result would not only hamstring Delta's ability to keep its fleet modern and efficient, and it would hinder Delta's ability to competitively and reliably serve its U.S. consumers.

In the airline industry, Boeing and Airbus are the two dominant aircraft producers and they compete globally for sales. Both companies have manufacturing facilities in the United States. Aircraft and engines are typically ordered far in advance of delivery pursuant to long-term purchase agreements that integrate into even longer-term fleet plans. Thus, the purchase decisions for aircraft deliveries scheduled over the next few years were all made long ago. Delta purchases from both Boeing and Airbus. A tariff imposed today would not only unexpectedly penalize business decisions made years ago to the detriment of Delta, its employees, and its customers, it would also reduce manufacturing in the United States by both Boeing and Airbus.

With regard to Boeing, Delta has 100 aircraft on order that were supposed to commence delivery in 2025. Due to delays in production, Boeing is not expected to timely deliver the aircraft already purchased. Additionally, Boeing is sold out until at least 2031. [

] Any additional tariffs on aircraft, engines, and parts, would threaten the viability of existing contracts, create instability in the production process, and would have far-reaching consequences on any future purchases planned out beyond 2031.

With regard to Airbus, Delta has always strived to promote U.S. manufacturing of aircraft and currently has a stated preference for taking delivery of aircraft manufactured by Airbus in Mobile, Alabama whenever possible. For example, Delta requires its A220 aircraft to be built in the United States unless U.S. production alone cannot meet Delta's needs. Since Airbus launched its Mobile production facility, roughly 60 percent of Delta's A321s and 50 percent of



Delta's A220s were produced in Mobile, Alabama. Additional tariffs on aircraft or component parts would make it more expensive for Airbus to manufacture aircraft in the United States. As a result, any such tariffs would disincentivize Airbus from continuing its manufacturing capabilities in the United States to the detriment of those employees and customers such as Delta.

Accordingly, without providing time to adjust, any potential tariffs would not only threaten U.S. manufacturing of aircraft, it would also inhibit Delta's ability to purchase aircraft produced domestically or abroad. To provide a real sense of what this impact would mean for U.S. passengers, Delta provides data on recent experiences. In the past two years (2023-2024), Delta took delivery of 47 Airbus aircraft produced in Canada, Germany, or France. If Delta had been unable to take delivery of those aircraft due to a tariff burden, Delta would have had to cancel nearly [ ] annual flights which would have impacted approximately 10 million Delta customers annually, and over [ ] Delta pilot, flight attendant, and airport jobs. A similar impact could be expected going forward if Commerce were to recommend Section 232 tariffs.

It would not be possible for Delta to replace the Airbus aircraft it has had on order for many years, because Boeing is the only alternative supplier available, and Boeing does not have aircraft to offer any time soon. Delta would simply have to make do without the new aircraft that it needs to grow its operations and improve the quality of service that it can offer its customers. Delta is proud of the fact that it operates one of the most reliable airline networks in the world. However, older aircraft require more maintenance than new aircraft, and an aging fleet is more susceptible to unplanned maintenance issues that can cause delays and cancellations. The risk of disruption and delays would also be exacerbated if additional tariffs are placed on the parts required to maintain the older aircraft.

A recommendation to impose tariffs on aircraft would directly impact every one of the over 100,000 Delta employees throughout the United States and the communities where they work and live. In short, imposing tariffs on aircraft will harm exclusively U.S. interests. Such duties will have negligible (if any) impact on foreign businesses, incentivize downsizing of manufacturing operations in the United States and sales of aircraft to non-U.S. customers.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Delta respectfully urges Commerce to avoid adopting any measures that would adversely and unilaterally impact U.S. interests. Imposing new tariffs on aircraft, engines, and parts would thwart Delta's increasing foothold in highly skilled manufacturing services such as maintenance, repairs, and overhauls of aircraft, engines, and component parts. The new tariffs would also hinder Delta's ability to purchase aircraft and maintain a modern and efficient fleet that can be competitive in the global airline industry and reliably serve its U.S. consumers.

Delta urges Commerce to carefully weigh the intended and unintended consequences before recommending any new measures. Rather than impose new tariffs, Delta would ask that Commerce recommend establishing a working group comprised of the U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Transportation, Department of Commerce, and industry stakeholders to identify additional ways to promote production in the United States of aircraft, engines, and parts. For example, the working group could explore whether a strategic stockpile of certain parts used by companies such as Delta to service military equipment would be beneficial. The working group might also find that supporting loan guarantee programs to encourage enrollment in Airframe and Powerplant training programs could positively impact U.S. national security goals.

If Commerce ultimately decides to recommend tariffs, Delta asks that Commerce provide the aviation industry a sufficient runway to adapt to any new measures, recognizing that there is substantial lead time required for producers of aviation equipment to gain FAA certification and other regulatory approvals. Delta would ask that Commerce recommend that any duties imposed do not apply to aircraft delivered pursuant to purchase agreements that were already signed prior to the effective date of the duties [

]. Additionally, Delta respectfully requests that Commerce provide a multi-year phase in that is structurally similar to that created by the Office of the Trade Representative in the context of shipbuilding.<sup>6</sup> Delta also requests that in the event of tariffs, this Administration adopts as a starting point the product scope and implementing

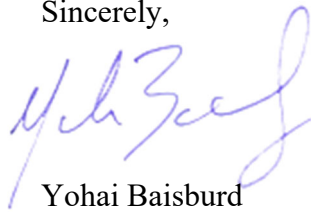
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<sup>6</sup> *Notice of Action and Proposed Action in Section 301 Investigation of China's Targeting the Maritime, Logistics, and Shipbuilding Sectors for Dominance, Request for Comments*, 90 Fed. Reg. 17,114 (Apr. 23, 2025).

language established by the first President Trump Administration's efforts in the Section 301 Action enforcing U.S. World Trade Organization rights in the Large Civil Aircraft dispute.<sup>7</sup>

Under such a framework, Delta and U.S. consumers would not be penalized for contracts negotiated years ago, Delta would be able to negotiate future contracts in a manner that implements the laudable goals of this Administration, and the United States would not lose the foothold Delta has created in highly skilled, highly paid manufacturing employment. In doing so, this Administration would effectively pursue both national and economic security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yohai Baisburd', is positioned above the printed name.

Yohai Baisburd  
Alex Hess

CASSIDY LEVY KENT (USA) LLP  
*Counsel to Delta Air Lines, Inc.*

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<sup>7</sup> *Notice of Determination and Action Pursuant to Section 301: Enforcement of U.S. WTO Rights in Large Civil Aircraft Dispute*, 84 Fed. Reg. 54,245 (Oct. 9, 2019); *Notice of Modification of Section 301 Action: Enforcement of U.S. WTO Rights in Large Civil Aircraft Dispute*, 85 Fed. Reg. 10,204 (Feb. 21, 2020).