

TSA delays air cargo security check rule

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 (UPI) -- The U.S. Transportation Security Administration is delaying new security measures for staff handling air cargo, after complaints from industry.

In a federal register notice last week, first reported by Government Executive magazine's Web site, the agency said it had "concluded that the regulated community will be unable to meet some deadlines in the air-cargo final rule because of the large number of employees and agents subject to the requirements."

The measures at issue mostly relate to criminal background checks and so called "security threat assessments," including terrorist watch-list checks.

Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., a lawmaker who has pressed for improved security on air cargo, lambasted the move as "outrageous."

He accused the administration of "bowing to industry pressure."

"When it comes to the billions of pounds of cargo transported on passenger planes every year, (the Transportation Security Administration) not only doesn't know what's 'in the box,' it doesn't know who's handling the box either."

Under the original rule, aircraft operators and foreign carriers would have had until Dec. 1 to carry out security threat assessments on workers with unescorted access to cargo, reported Government Executive. The deadline has now been extended until March 15.

Agency spokesman Darrin Kayser told the publication that about 50,000 workers would be affected by the change, but said other security measures enacted by the rule, such as multiple security layers, random screening and the "known shipper" program, would go ahead on schedule.