

Overhaul needed for air traffic control?

by UPI

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- A new book suggests that the United States could look to Europe for a model for reforming its air-traffic control system. "Managing the Skies: Public Policy, Organization and Financing of Air Navigation," by Clinton V. Oster of Indiana University and John S. Strong of the College of William and Mary, is to be published in January. "The U.S. is not keeping pace," said Oster, an associate dean in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. "We're not the best practice any more, even though for years we were." European countries have adopted public-private partnerships, user cooperatives or independent government corporations to manage air traffic control while the United States still uses a government agency, Oster said. The U.S. system is also funded by taxes, mostly those imposed on ticket buyers, so corporate jets pay less than their share and airlines more. The authors say U.S. controllers often do a superb job, citing Sept. 11, 2001, when they landed thousands of planes safely in a few hours. But they say that the government wasted a chance to use the period of lower air travel after the terrorist attacks to change the system.

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