



THREE Airbus A380s, a Boeing 747 and several smaller jets, shown in an airport operations photo, are backed up on the tarmac as they wait for gates after landing at LAX. Controllers say such congestion occurs regularly.

Understaffing and soaring overtime take a toll at LAX

Fatigue among air traffic controllers raises concerns about aviation safety and efficiency amid a surge in passengers

By Dan Weikel

A record 70.6 million passengers a year now pass through Los Angeles International Airport as it undergoes a multibillion-dollar “world class” modernization.

Passenger terminals, like Tom Bradley International, are being remodeled with upscale shopping and dining. Runways are being refurbished, and public transit is finally on the way.

But high up in the control tower of the nation’s second-busiest airport, the outlook is not so good. Air traffic controllers are working longer and harder than ever to safely handle the enormous volume of aircraft arriving at and departing from this prominent West Coast gateway.

Overtime is soaring and serious staff shortages loom despite warnings issued in 2009 by the inspector general for the U.S. Transportation Department.

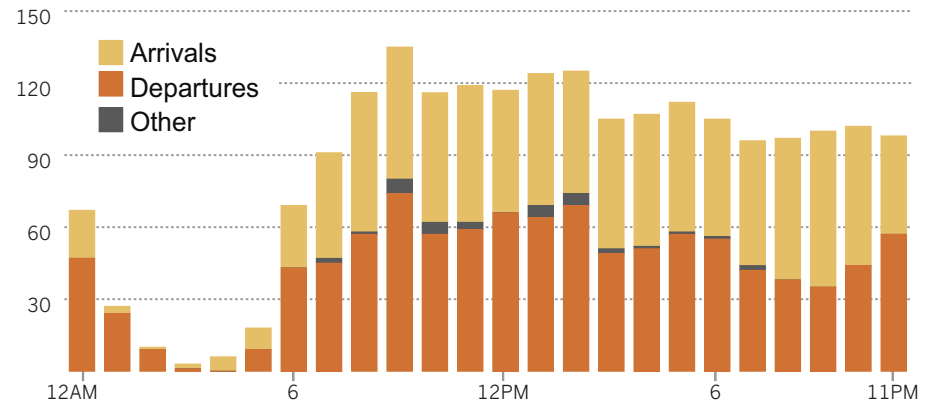
The dropout rate for trainees has been as high as 60%, and many controllers routinely work more than five days a week, raising concerns about fatigue. The situation has become so bad that even seasoned professionals seek reassignment to less stressful airports.

“It’s gotten worse,” said Mike Foote, an LAX air traffic controller and local representative of the National Air Traffic Controllers Assn. “We are not saying the sky is

[See LAX, A10]

High volume

On Aug. 10, air traffic controllers handled 2,065 arrivals, departures and other operations (including flyovers) at LAX. Here is a breakdown of their workload by hour:



Source: National Air Traffic Controllers Assn.

LORENA IÑIGUEZ ELEBEE Los Angeles Times

S.F. voters reject limits on Airbnb

Measure became a lightning rod for controversy over the cost of housing.

By Lee Romney and Tracey Lien

SAN FRANCISCO — Most California voters weighing in on ballot measures Tuesday faced school district bond issues or yawn-inducing parcel taxes. Here in San Francisco, however,

the very soul of the city seemed to be at stake. Or at least that’s how it felt to many.

The issue at the heart of it all: housing.

“When people can’t afford to live in the city, it just changes overnight,” said Michael Reiner, 24, an advertising industry freelancer who moved here two years ago and “got lucky” when he found a rental in the Sunset District. “I think it’s the defining issue for the city.”

Reiner had given his resounding approval to Propo-

sition F, the most visible of a host of housing-related measures on the ballot, and one closely watched by other cities. It would have tightened restrictions on short-term housing rentals, taking aim most pointedly at Airbnb in the hometown of the sharing economy tech giant, valued at \$25 billion.

But the measure was soundly defeated Tuesday, 55% to 45%, with about 133,000 votes cast.

Airbnb spent more than \$8 million to defeat the proposition, which among other

requirements would have limited rentals to 75 days a year regardless of whether they are hosted (even if residents are renting a room in their homes while they are still there).

It also would have allowed potential misdemeanor charges against hosting platforms that listed unlawful short-term rentals, and permitted “interested parties” such as neighbors to sue companies that didn’t follow the stricter rules.

The costly ballot fight be-

[See Airbnb, A12]

Tarantino is ‘not backing down’

He says critics calling for boycott of his film want to take the focus off police brutality.

By Glenn Whipp

Under increasing fire from law enforcement groups, director Quentin Tarantino broke his silence Tuesday and said his remarks condemning police brutality had been misrepresented to “demonize” him and deflect attention away from the issue.

“All cops are not murderers,” Tarantino told The Times in his first public response to the controversy. “I never said that. I never even implied that.”

Police unions across the country, including ones representing officers in Los Angeles and Orange County, have called for a boycott of Tarantino’s upcoming movie, “The Hateful Eight,” following remarks the filmmaker made at an Oct. 24 rally in New York to call attention to those killed in police shootings.

“I’m a human being with a conscience,” Tarantino said at the rally. “And when I see murder I cannot stand by. And I have to call the murdered the murdered and I have to call the murderers the murderers.”

The threatened boycott could dim prospects for Tarantino’s new film, which is set for a Christmas release and has been expected to be a critical and commercial success for Tarantino and [See Tarantino, A8]

In a postwar first, China and Taiwan plan summit

The talks could be a bridge or wedge. The timing, before island’s vote, invites criticism.

By Julie Makinen

BEIJING — Separated by just 100 miles of sea, but a chasm of war, history and politics, the leaders of mainland China and Taiwan have never met face-to-face since the two sides split in 1949 after a long and bitter civil war.

But on Saturday, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou will confer directly with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Singapore, the two governments have announced, a bold move that could push the two sides closer together or drive them even further apart.

Official news agencies for both sides sought to downplay expectations for the meeting. The two presidents will exchange views on “consolidating cross-strait peace and maintaining the cross-strait status quo,” Taiwan’s Central News Agency said, and no statement or agreement is planned.

Zhang Zhijun, Beijing’s top official for Taiwan affairs, called the talks a “pragmatic arrangement” but noted that “political differences” have not been resolved, the mainland’s New China News Agency said.

Still, the meeting was immediately described as a historic breakthrough, given the decades of dangerous animosity between Taiwan and the mainland. And it



JASON LEE Pool Photo

CHINA’S Xi Jinping will be looking to bolster his image at home.



WALLY SANTANA AP

TAIWAN’S Ma Ying-jeou seeks to secure his legacy of better ties.

comes just before the presidential election on the island of 23 million, which after decades of dictatorship has transformed into one of Asia’s most vibrant democracies.

The mainland’s communist government has always regarded Taiwan as a renegade province that must eventually be brought under Beijing’s control, by force if necessary. Taiwan, which [See Summit, A4]



U.S. Army/Getty Images

U.S. suspends \$2.7-billion blimp trial run

Troubled JLENS missile-defense system is to get Pentagon review after blimp broke away and flew uncontrolled over mid-Atlantic states. **NATION, A7**

L.A. Fair faces investigation

Finances, tax-exempt status are questioned after Times reports that the nonprofit lost millions while richly compensating executives. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather: Mostly sunny and quite cool. L.A. Basin: 69/52. **B8**



LORI SHEPLER Los Angeles Times

FATHER GREG BOYLE at Jobs for a Future in 1998. It later became Homeboy Industries.

COLUMN ONE

SLOWING BUT RESOLUTE

After 30 years of aiding gang members, Father Boyle finds balance

By Brittny Mejia

In a small mortuary in East Los Angeles, a mother wept over the silver casket holding her son. Behind the pews, photos of Roger Soriano showed a young man throwing up gang signs with friends, a tattoo reading “J13” for Jardin 13 etched into his scalp.

He had been killed at 21, shot dead as he allegedly tried to rob a shopkeeper.

Behind the pulpit on that July day, the priest betrayed no strain in conjuring up virtues from the short arc of a life that had ended so messily.

“I knew Roger when he was a little kid and later on when he was a teenager, and you could always see the goodness. Always,” Father Greg Boyle said. “Where Roger is right now, he has the same perspective that God has. The same God that is too busy loving us to be disappointed.”

For decades now, young men who died by the gun have gotten their final benediction from Boyle, who

began as a fresh-faced, thirtysomething priest in an era when the City of Angels churned out gang carnage on an industrial scale, inspiring movies such as “Boyz n the Hood” and “Colors” and making “drive-by” part of the country’s lexicon.

In some years in the early 1990s, more than 2,000 people were killed in L.A. County. The deaths came hard and fast. During one three-week period, Boyle buried eight young men and boys.

Boyle is now 61. His hair has thinned and turned white. Soriano’s funeral was his 200th connected to the gang lifestyle. But he had gone months without one.

“I couldn’t go through all that again,” Boyle said. “It was too intense, but you do it. It was like war.”

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Few people can lay claim to witnessing the evolution of violence in L.A. like Boyle, a Jesuit who in 1988 created Jobs for a Future at the Dolores Mission parish in Boyle Heights. That became Homeboy [See Boyle, A13]

Air traffic controllers are fatigued

[LAX, from A1]

falling or an accident is imminent. But fatigue is a real thing. We are tired, and we have been grinding this out for years. It is in the best interest of everyone, especially the flying public, that the staffing and overtime issues get resolved.”

Federal Aviation Administration officials said they share the controllers’ concerns and that steps are being taken at LAX and facilities across the country to attract and train additional personnel. Several rounds of hiring have occurred during the last two years, they added, and more recruitment drives are planned.

The controllers association said some of the most acute shortages are at five control centers that guide aircraft into several dozen major airports. They include Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson, Chicago O’Hare, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Houston Intercontinental as well as La Guardia and John F. Kennedy in New York.

But LAX is “in worse shape than a lot of the facilities we have concerns about because of the complexity of



RICHARD DERK Los Angeles Times

THE LAX control tower rises behind the Theme Building. Many controllers work more than five days a week.

the traffic,” said Patricia Gilbert, executive vice president of the controllers association. “You just can’t take an academy graduate and expect him or her to qualify

in a complicated tower like LAX’s.”

The FAA and union leaders attribute most of the problem at LAX to three major things: deep congressional budget cuts, an unexpectedly heavy rate of retirements and the complexities of maneuvering hundreds of commercial planes a day — from regional carriers to international jumbo jets — around a relatively small, 3,500-acre airfield surrounded by urban development.

Though staffing numbers can be fluid, LAX now has 39 fully certified controllers and 11 trainees who were credentialed at other airports but need to learn local procedures. Foote says 19 controllers are eligible to retire or are awaiting retirement dates. Three others could become supervisors.

According to the association and the inspector general’s 2009 audit, the number of fully certified air traffic controllers at LAX has dropped from 45 in 2004. Meanwhile, overtime has continued to climb, from 5,866 hours in fiscal year 2008 to 13,396 hours in fiscal 2015. There were 606 hours of overtime in 2006.

The vast majority of extra hours, Foote said, are absorbed by fully certified controllers, many of whom have been putting in at least 40 six-day workweeks a year.

The annual salary of a typical controller is about \$122,500, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, with overtime paid at time and a half.

Reports by the federal Government Accountability Office and the National Transportation Safety Board show that high levels of overtime and understaffing at air traffic control facilities have potential implications for aviation safety and the efficient handling of the multimillion-dollar aircraft they guide.

The NTSB has found that errors by tired controllers have contributed to serious runway incursions, where planes stray too close to where others might be moving. If staffing levels decline enough, it could at least lead to slowdowns in airport operations and trigger delays for travelers.

Foote believes that 52 certified controllers, plus 10 trainees, would be adequate to staff LAX around the clock. He said they are necessary given a dramatic surge in air traffic, modernization projects on the airfield that require more ground control and the wider use of very large pas-

senger jets that need special procedures to move safely around the airport.

LAX, which has experienced a 5% to 6% annual growth rate due to a resurgent economy, now handles about 9 million more passengers a year than in 2005.

During the summer, daily arrivals and departures on the airport’s four runways regularly exceed 2,000. This fall, flights have been reaching 1,800 to 1,900 a day, at least 28% more than in 2009.

Controllers oversee it all from a centralized 22-story tower, which has a 360-degree view of the airport. They work eight-hour shifts — morning, swing and graveyard.

During the busiest times of day, controllers must handle about 120 to 130 aircraft an hour, or one about every 30 seconds. The busiest times are 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. The slowest are 1 a.m. to 5 a.m.

In addition to the rising

‘We are tired, and we have been grinding this out for years.’

— MIKE FOOTE, LAX air traffic controller and local representative of the National Air Traffic Controllers Assn.

workload, Foote said there are other disincentives for controllers to remain at LAX or to transfer there, including better pay and lower costs of living in other parts of the country.

“I am sending out all the paperwork I can, trying to leave,” said one 20-year controller, who would speak only on condition that his name not be used for fear of upsetting his supervisors. “Let’s say the atmosphere at LAX offers a lesser quality of life and I’m tired of the work schedule.”

The controller said he has been placed on mandatory overtime, which means he must work extra hours when needed. He estimated that he has put in 35 to 38 six-day workweeks so far this year. During the busy summer months, he said, all controllers were on mandatory overtime.

“I’ve never seen it like this,” he said.

To attract more controllers to openings at LAX, FAA officials say they have streamlined training and installed an air traffic control simulator in the tower. Applicants must be certified as

controllers at other airports before they can enter LAX’s training program — a policy designed to avoid the high failure rate encountered with inexperienced trainees.

There are also cash incentives, and controllers who move from other local airports to LAX are now allowed to transfer back if they can’t complete the training.

“All are successful and helpful things, but they are limited in scope,” Foote said. “LAX is a difficult facility to staff due to the complexity of airport operations and personnel shortages. With the constant grind day in and day out, air traffic controllers are not willing to do it after a while and we lose trained professionals. This is spreading throughout the entire air traffic control system.”

Nationally, the ranks of certified controllers are at a 27-year low. Since September 2012, the number of fully certified staff members has declined from 11,735 to 10,859, of which 3,257 are eligible to retire this year.

However, the FAA was 34% below its hiring goal for 2015 — the fifth straight year it has missed its numbers.

“People are generally retiring sooner rather than later and in higher numbers than the FAA expected. They are saying they just can’t work like this anymore,” said Gilbert.

Contributing to the problem were automatic spending cuts triggered by Congress’ Budget Control Act of 2011 that later became known as the 2013 sequestration. That austerity move forced the agency to shut down its air traffic control academy for nine months.

Association officials say adequate funding is still uncertain and there has been a lack of incentives to attract and keep people at the more demanding facilities.

Gilbert said the association also is concerned about chronic fatigue at the more complex airports and an inability to pull controllers off the line to work on training or to test new procedures and technology.

Last month, association officials went to Congress and asked the House aviation subcommittee to hold hearings on the matter. Committee members have yet to decide to do so.

“About 15,000 certified controllers would be a more comfortable level,” Gilbert said. “We’d like to get to the point where we can meet the FAA’s hiring goals.”

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About **Mr. Huzemin**

Mr. Huzemin, well known TCM Rheumatoid Arthritis expert, created a new method of using Chinese herbs, all natural, low side effects, called “Traditional Chinese herb nutrition immunization therapy”. This method has already brought 100,000 RA & AS patients back to health in China during 1995-2015. Until now, Mr. Hu established and ran 10 RA & AS specialized hospitals, nine branches in China and one RA group in Hong Kong.

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