

LightSquared Alleges 'Rigged' GPS Testing

LightSquared, a U.S. company preparing to launch a wireless mobile broadband network (ASW, 7–8/11, p. 26), has protested a Jan. 13 finding by nine federal departments and agencies. The National Space-Based Positioning, Navigation and Timing Executive Committee (PNT ExCom), after the government's November 2011 tests and analysis of further LightSquared modifications to the originally proposed network, says in part, "There appear to be no practical solutions or mitigations that would permit the LightSquared broadband service, as proposed, to operate in the next few months or years without significantly interfering with GPS. As a result, no additional testing is warranted at this time."

PNT ExCom had planned next to evaluate LightSquared's receiver-filtering solutions for mitigating interference with GPS high-precision and timing receivers, including those used in aviation and national security. Jeff Carlisle, the company's executive vice president for regulatory affairs and public policy, had said on Dec. 23, 2011, that its own early testing "shows that properly filtered high-precision GPS devices do not suffer any loss of accuracy in the presence of LightSquared's signals."

On Jan. 13, LightSquared charged that PNT had demonstrated "bias and inappropriate collusion with the private sector" and "systematic disregard for fairness and transparency," prompting



the company to file a conflict of interest complaint with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and to demand unbiased retesting. On Jan. 18, LightSquared added, in part, that the process used by U.S. Air Force Space Command to conduct testing for PNT ExCom was "rigged by manufacturers of GPS receivers and government end users to produce bogus results."

—Wayne Rosenkrans

A380 Wing Inspections

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) says operators of 20 Airbus A380s must conduct detailed visual inspections of the airplanes' wings by early March to check for cracks.

According to Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2012–0013, published Jan. 20, the inspection requirement applies to airplanes that have completed more than 1,300 flights. Airplanes that

have completed more than 1,800 flights were to be inspected "within four days of [Jan. 24, 2012]," EASA said.

The AD was issued after cracks were found during an unscheduled internal inspection of an A380 wing, EASA said, adding that subsequent inspections of other A380s revealed additional cracks involving rib feet within the wings.

Airbus has established repair procedures to be implemented if cracks are found during the inspections, EASA said.

The agency said it is continuing to review the matter and additional actions may be required.

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New Equipment

The Australian aviation industry will be given as long as five years to install new aircraft navigation systems — such as automatic dependent surveillance–broadcast and traffic-alert and collision avoidance system II — in existing aircraft, John McCormick, director of aviation safety for the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), says.

CASA is reviewing industry responses to its proposal for retrofitting existing aircraft with the equipment and plans to develop a notice of proposed rulemaking later this year to discuss exactly what will be required.

"For such significant equipment retrofits of existing aircraft ... whenever possible, CASA will always endeavor to provide industry with a minimum period of four to five years from publication of a mandate to the compliance date," McCormick said.

He added that CASA will wait at least four years before ADS–B requirements are imposed on operators of visual flight rules aircraft in much of the country's airspace.

Category 2

Curaçao and Sint Maarten have received U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Category 2 ratings, which signify that they do not comply with aviation safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The Category 2 rating means that a country “either lacks laws or regulations necessary to oversee air carriers in accordance with minimum international standards, or that its civil aviation authority ... is deficient in one or more areas, such as technical expertise, trained personnel, record keeping or inspection procedures,” the FAA said.

Curaçao and Sint Maarten previously were part of the Netherlands Antilles, which had an FAA Category 1 rating, which signified that it had the laws and regulations required to oversee air carriers in accordance with ICAO standards.

Under the Category 2 rating, air carriers based in Curaçao and Sint Maarten will be permitted to continue existing service to the United States but may not establish new service.

FAA Faulted on Training Oversight

U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) oversight of air carrier pilot training and proficiency programs “lacks the rigor needed to identify and track poor-performing pilots and address potential program risks,” the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General (OIG) says.



An OIG report criticizes the FAA for not providing sufficient training for its inspectors on how to evaluate the air carriers’ basic training assessments. In addition, the report said that the FAA “does not provide sufficient oversight of check airmen, who perform the majority of proficiency checks on air carrier pilots.”

The OIG also faulted the FAA for an information-request process that “hinders air carriers’ ability” to obtain information maintained by the agency to aid in evaluating pilot competence and qualifications.

The report contained seven recommendations, and the FAA agreed, at least in part, with all seven. The recommendations included a call for the FAA to require its inspectors to “select a representative sample of air carrier proficiency and line check rides each year to analyze the results for trends and take action if needed, in accordance with FAA guidance.”

The recommendations also said that the FAA should renew the authority of check airmen every two years “to increase accountability in the system,” develop a standardized procedure for air carriers to use in reporting pilot failures of proficiency checks and implement standardized training for aviation safety inspectors on the administration of U.S. Federal Aviation Regulations Part 121 check rides and check airman observations.

EASA Sees Safety Improvement

Aviation safety worldwide recorded a “modest improvement” in 2011, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) says.

EASA’s preliminary safety data for 2011 indicated that the number of fatal accidents decreased to 45, down from 46 in 2010.

Wikimedia



The fatal accident in 2011 involved an aircraft from an EASA member state — the crash of a Fairchild Metro III in Cork, Ireland, in which six people were killed, EASA said. The single accident in 2011 followed a year without fatalities.

“Safety performance continues to show important regional differences,” EASA said. “The region of non-EASA member states in Europe shows the highest number of fatalities with a total of 138. This is followed by the African region with 87 fatalities.”

In Other News ...

The Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority has asked for public comment on proposed new rules for some types of **pilot training**, including multi-crew pilot license training, and contract training and checking for smaller airline operations. ... Eurocontrol is marking the 10th anniversary of the **reduced vertical separation minimum (RVSM)** program, first implemented in January 2002 over the North Atlantic. The decade-long implementation concluded in November 2011 in airspace above the Russian Federation and other Eurasian states.

Compiled and edited by Linda Werfelman.