

Safety News

Blacklist Expansion?

The European Commission (EC) has revised its blacklist of airlines banned in the European Union, accompanying issuance of the new list with a proposal to develop a worldwide blacklist (ASW, 4/09, p. 42).

“Citizens have the right to fly safely everywhere in the world,” said Antonio Tajani, EC vice president in charge of transport policy. “We will not accept that airlines fly at different standards when they operate inside and outside Europe. It is high time that the international community rethinks its safety policy; those airlines which are unsafe should not be allowed to fly anywhere.”

Roberto Kobeh González, president of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), said he does not believe that an international blacklist is the answer.

“Lists that discourage passengers [from using a specific] airline would not

necessarily reduce accidents,” Kobeh said. “But I fully agree with ... the need of working together in order to address deficiencies affecting air transport security.”

The revised list — made public in mid-July — lifted the ban on European operations that previously had been imposed on four Indonesian airlines “because their [civil aviation] authority ensures that they respect the international safety standards,” the EC said. Other Indonesian air carriers remain on the blacklist.

The previously blacklisted One Two Go, based in Thailand, is no longer on the list because Thai authorities have revoked its operating certificate, the EC said.

In addition, TAAG Angola Airlines is now permitted to operate into Portugal but only with specific aircraft and under specific conditions. Six other carriers also may operate only under specific conditions.

The list bans 255 air carriers from operations in the European Union,

Susan Reed



including all carriers from 12 countries — Angola, Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon (with exceptions for three carriers that operate under restrictions), Indonesia (except for the four carriers that have been removed from the list), Kazakhstan (except for one carrier operating under restrictions), Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Swaziland and Zambia.

Color Vision Recommendations

Revised color vision requirements and testing could lead to the acceptance of 35 percent of color-deficient pilots who apply for medical certification, according to a report by researchers from the U.K. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Research by color vision specialists from the two agencies resulted in joint

recommendations for new color vision standards (ASW, 12/08, p. 38). The research was needed because of a “lack of reliable, standardized tests and the absence of information on the specific color vision needs of professional flight crew,” the CAA researchers said in the foreword to CAA Paper 2009/04, which discussed the work. The report also was published as FAA Office of Aerospace Medicine report 09/11.

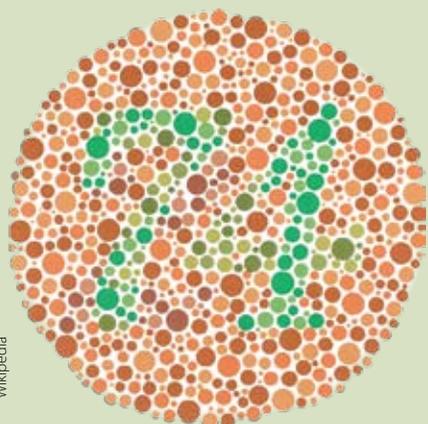
In their studies, the researchers evaluated “the level of color vision loss above which subjects with color deficiency no longer perform the most safety-critical, color-related tasks within the aviation environment with the same accuracy as [people with normal color vision],” the joint report said.

The result was a new test that accurately assesses a pilot applicant’s color vision and identifies the type and severity of color vision loss.

“The results of the test also indicate whether the applicant’s color vision meets the minimum requirements for safe performance that have emerged as necessary from this investigation,” the report said.

The report noted that color has long been important in aviation in the coding of signals and other information and that, as a result, color vision requirements are necessary “to ensure that flight crew are able to discriminate and recognize different colors, both on the flight deck and externally.”

In recent years, the requirements adopted by some civil aviation authorities have been criticized as inappropriate; critics say the tests have been devised so that pilot applicants with minimal color deficiencies often fail, even though many of them might be able to “perform safety-critical tasks as well as [pilots with normal color vision].”



Wikipedia

NTSB Seeks to Replace Oxygen Hoses

Operators should be required to replace electrically conductive combustible oxygen hoses in their aircraft, and use of the hoses should be prohibited, unless conductivity is an intentional — and approved — element of the hoses' design, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) says.

The recommendations follow the NTSB investigation of a June 28, 2008, fire in an ABX Air Boeing 767-200 before engine startup at San Francisco International Airport. The captain and first officer — the only people in the airplane — evacuated through the cockpit windows and were not injured in the fire, which caused substantial damage to the airplane.

The crew said that they had heard loud popping and hissing sounds as they conducted the engine start checklist and that the first officer opened the cockpit door and saw “black smoke in the supernumerary compartment ... [and] fire near the ceiling,” the NTSB said. About

one minute earlier, the first officer had been in the supernumerary compartment, and there had been no smoke or fire at that time.

The NTSB said that the probable cause of the accident was “the design of the supplemental oxygen system hoses and the lack of positive separation between electrical wiring and electrically conductive oxygen system components.” This lack of positive separation “allowed a short circuit to breach a combustible oxygen hose, release oxygen and initiate a fire,” the NTSB said.

As a result of the investigation, the NTSB issued 11 safety recommendations to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, including several that concerned requirements for oxygen system tubing and other components. Another recommendation said that operators of transport category cargo airplanes should be required to install smoke detectors in supernumerary compartments in their aircraft.



U.S. National Transportation Safety Board

The NTSB also recommended that ABX Air “modify [its] continuing analysis and surveillance program so that all identified chronic discrepancies, such as those affecting the oxygen system on the accident airplane, are effectively resolved.”

Record Review

Pilots seeking jobs with U.S. airlines will undergo increased scrutiny by potential employers, who have agreed to review not only records from past employers but also all records maintained by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) involving pilot applicants.

The pilot record checks will be conducted in accordance with an agreement between the airlines, pilot unions and the FAA. The agreement, which was accepted during a meeting of all three parties, is part of an effort to strengthen “pilot hiring, training and

testing practices at airlines that provide regional service, as well as at the country’s major air carriers,” the FAA said.

The airlines and labor unions also agreed to review and strengthen pilot training programs. Representatives of both sides recommended developing mentoring programs to “expose less experienced pilots to the safety culture and professional standards practiced by more senior pilots,” the FAA said. “The programs could pair experienced pilots from the major airlines with pilots from their regional airline partners.”

FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt said all airlines will be asked to adopt safety reporting systems such as flight operational quality assurance (FOQA) and the aviation safety action program to generate more useful data on safety issues.



© Ad Doward/Stockphoto

EASA Safety Review

Only 5.5 percent of fatal commercial air transport accidents worldwide involved airplanes registered in a member state (MS) of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), the agency says in its *Annual Safety Review* for 2008.

Three fatal commercial air transport accidents were recorded in Europe in 2008 — the same number that occurred in 2007 and comparable to the lowest annual totals from the previous 10-year period of 1997 through 2006, the report said (see table). The average for the 10-year period was six fatal accidents per year.

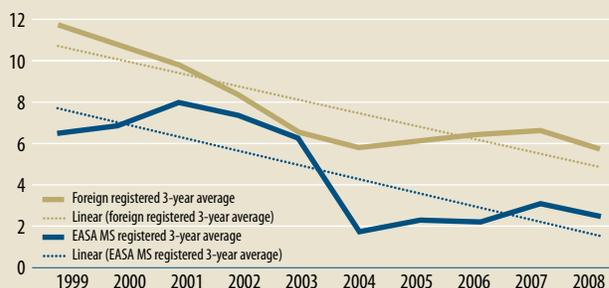
Overview of Total Number of Accidents and Fatal Accidents for EASA MS Registered Airplanes

Period	Total Number of Accidents	Fatal Accidents	Fatalities on Board	Ground Fatalities
1997–2006 (average)	32	6	105	1
2007 (total)	37	3	25	1
2008 (total)	35	3	160	2

The number of on-board fatalities in 2008 was 160 — compared with the 1997–2006 annual average of 105 — and 154 of the 160 resulted from the Aug. 20, 2008, crash of a Spanair McDonnell Douglas MD-82 during takeoff from Madrid.

The 2008 fatal accident rate was just over three per 10 million scheduled passenger flights averaged over a three-year period, the report said (see figure). “During the past decade,” the report added, “the rate of accidents decreased from an average of four to three accidents per 10 million flights for EASA [member states].”

Fatal Accidents in Commercial Air Transport — EASA MS and Foreign Registered Airplanes



When accidents were assigned to categories, the highest accident rates were those associated with “abnormal runway contact,” “non-powerplant component failure,” “runway excursion” and “ground handling.”

“In many cases, runway excursions are consequential events in accidents, and therefore a large number of accidents are assigned this category,” the report said. “There has been an increase in the rate of accidents associated with ‘flight preparation, loading or ground servicing’ (all categorized under ‘ramp’). Although this rate has increased to an average of almost eight accidents per 10 million flights, it remains relatively low. ‘System or component failures not associated with the engines’ (SCF-NP) also appear to be ever more present in accidents of EASA [member states] aircraft. Accidents attributed as ‘controlled flight into terrain (CFIT)’ appear to have an overall decreasing rate.”

Window Check

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), citing a recent event in which a side glass window of an ATR 72 blew out during a ground pressure test, is requiring operators of some ATR 42s and 72s to inspect the windows for indications of damage or past repairs.

The investigation of the incident revealed anomalies in the windows that are considered indications of structural deterioration, the EASA said. “Air or water leakages between the Z-bar and the outer glass ply, or between the inner

retainer and inner glass ply indicate the presence of deteriorating structural components in the window,” the agency said.

Attempted repairs could lead to the same type of window failure that occurred in the recent event, the EASA said.

An EASA emergency airworthiness directive cautioned that an in-flight failure of a forward side window “could have catastrophic consequences for the airplane and/or cause injuries to people on the ground. The loss of the forward side window while the airplane is on the ground with a positive differential cabin pressure could also cause injuries to people inside or around the airplane.”



© Roberto Benetti/Wikimedia

Annual Report

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has delivered its annual report to Congress,

summarizing the 19 major accident investigations — including seven involving aviation accidents — that began in 2008. The NTSB also investigates highway, marine, pipeline and railroad accidents.

The report noted that the NTSB also initiated 221 other accident investigations, including 206 that involved aviation, and provided support in 18 international aviation accident investigations. Of 129 safety recommendations issued in 2008, 86 involved aviation, the report said.



Safety Culture

Administrator Randy Babbitt of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) says the agency is “moving away from a culture of blame and punishment” by reducing the emphasis on blame when errors by air traffic controllers are reported.

“Controllers remain accountable for their actions, but we’re moving toward a new era that focuses on why these events occur and what can be done to prevent them,” Babbitt said.

Under the revised procedure, controllers’ names no longer will be included in reports sent to FAA headquarters about operational errors; removal of names will “allow investigators to focus on what happened rather than who was at fault,” the FAA said. Training and disciplinary action will continue to be administered as

needed, and these actions will be included in the controller’s record.

“We need quality information in order to identify problems and learn from incidents before they become accidents,” Babbitt said “The best sources of that information are our front line employees. Our success depends on their willingness to identify safety concerns.”

Another procedural change, intended to avoid disruptions of operations, will keep controllers in their positions after operational errors “unless it is deemed necessary to remove them,” the FAA said.

The FAA said the changes are part of a transition to a nonpunitive reporting system for air traffic controllers known as the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP), already in place for controllers in about one-third of the United States.

Under ATSAP, controllers and other employees can report safety problems “without fear of punishment unless the incident is deliberate or criminal,” the FAA said.



© Jennifer Walz/Dreamstime

Manslaughter Probe

France is conducting a judicial inquiry into the June 1 crash of an Air France Airbus A330 to determine responsibility for the accident, published reports say.

The Paris prosecutor’s office said it was conducting the inquiry against “unnamed persons on charges of manslaughter.”

All 228 people in the A330 were killed when the airplane plunged into the Atlantic Ocean during a flight from Rio de Janeiro to Paris. A preliminary

French accident report said that the flight crew had been in contact with Brazilian air traffic controllers and that, more than two hours after departure, a position message and aircraft maintenance messages were transmitted automatically by the aircraft communications addressing and reporting system (ACARS). There were no further communications from the airplane.

Wreckage and bodies were found several days later by searchers from the French and Brazilian navies.

In Other News ...

The United Arab Emirates **General Civil Aviation Authority** (GCAA) has signed an agreement with Flight Safety Foundation to establish a partnership aimed at expanding the GCAA’s access to best practices in applying high safety standards. ... Maintenance performance at **Qantas** has improved in the wake of reviews in 2008 in which the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia found “emerging problems” with the airline’s maintenance. ... Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker and Member Kathryn O’Leary Higgins have announced their resignations from the U.S. **National Transportation Safety Board** (NTSB). Both Rosenker, a former NTSB chairman and member since 2003, and Higgins, a member since January 2006, say they are leaving the NTSB for opportunities in the private sector.

Compiled and edited by Linda Werfelman.



© Christopher Weyer/Wikimedia