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We Need to Do Even Better

BY GIOVANNI BISIGNANI

We should be proud. Despite the enormous financial losses of the past several years, airlines have kept firmly focused on our number one priority — safety. The hull loss rate for 2005 was our lowest ever — 0.76 hull losses for every million flight sectors. That is equivalent to one for every 1.3 million flights.

International Air Transport Association (IATA) member airlines did much better, with a hull loss rate of 0.35 per million sectors, or one accident for every 2.9 million flights. These are the lowest figures ever, a testimony to our industry's responsible approach to transporting over two billion passengers safely each year.

Still, every accident is one too many. And the spate of accidents during the summer of 2005 focused our attention again on the need to do even better. Over the past 10 years, the accident rate has improved 42 percent. Our target is a hull loss rate of 0.65 for 2006 — half the 1.34 recorded in 1998.

Global Standards and Harmonization

There is no panacea for safety. Global standards and harmonization are behind the tremendous progress so far. And transparency is critical. Shadow boxing is not the answer. The recent decision

of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to publish the results of its Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) is to be applauded. Effective and systematic follow-up to improve the deficiencies will be the next critical step.

And that does not mean simply throwing money at the problem. The World Bank's decision to hold back funding of infrastructure projects pending compliance with USOAP is a major signal. Where compliance has not been achieved, an effective plan of action is necessary.

Our industry cannot tolerate even a few governments that are not taking safety seriously. At the recent IATA Annual General Meeting in Paris, June 4–6, IATA for the first time named four states for which we have a particular concern: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Swaziland, Equatorial Guinea and Sierra Leone. Quite simply, flags of convenience have no place in a safe industry. All four are making progress. And IATA's technical experts in Africa are working closely with these governments to help lay plans for improvement. We need to see results fast.

Airline Efforts

At the same time, we recognize that solutions begin at home. IATA is working

closely with its member airlines, guided by the Six Point Safety Program. The program includes a systematic approach to safety that converges efforts in safety auditing — the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), infrastructure safety, data management and analysis, safety management systems, flight operations, and cargo safety.

IOSA is at the core of our efforts on safety. Since its launch in 2003, it has filled an important void as the industry's only global standard for operational safety management. The standards are based on ICAO standards and were developed in cooperation with many of the leading regulators to combine industry best practice. The goal has always been to raise the bar on safety. We have a tough standard that is making a difference in the industry.

Program management is world-class. IOSA standards are freely available to any commercial airline — IATA member or nonmember. IATA manages the program, data collection and quality control from its own budget as a part of our commitment to safety. Seven independent audit organizations form a competitive market for auditing services. We have seen the price of auditing drop significantly since the program started. And the entire process was ISO 9001:2000 approved in 2005.

Already, 102 airlines are on the IOSA registry (Figure 1). Fully 189 IATA member airlines — representing 75 percent of scheduled international traffic — are in the audit process. And 57 nonmember airlines have seen the value and have chosen to participate. Soon, the cargo operations version of IOSA will be available.

Following a recommendation of our Board of Governors, the 62nd IATA Annual General Meeting approved a resolution to make IOSA a condition of IATA membership. By the end of 2006, all IATA members must have committed to an IOSA audit. The audit must be conducted by the end of 2007. And by the end of 2008, any audit findings must be corrected. Any new airline joining IATA will not have its membership confirmed until the audit is complete and all findings are corrected. And all IATA airlines must maintain a valid IOSA registration following the two-year audit cycle. The message is clear: Airlines that do not meet this standard have no place in IATA.

Governments are seeing IOSA benefits: Safety improvement requires coordination and cooperation. Recently, IATA signed a landmark agreement with ICAO to exchange safety and audit information at the international level. Individual governments already are using IOSA results in an effective way. In 2004, the United States allowed its carriers to submit IOSA audit data when its carriers were code-sharing with non-U.S. partners. The major airline alliances have followed on with this by using IOSA as their measure of quality in safety for their members.

Recently, we have seen governments taking even more proactive steps. Chile, Egypt and Madagascar have made IOSA registration a requirement for their airline certification process. Jordan, Bahrain, Turkey, Tunisia, Mexico, Hungary,

Nigeria and Ethiopia are in the process of similar action. And the Arab Civil Aviation Conference concluded that from 2008, any carrier flying into the region must be on the IOSA registry.

IOSA is not just for IATA members, and we appreciate the support of the Flight Safety Foundation and other organizations in promoting IOSA as a global standard for safety.

There is clearly a role for IOSA in Europe's current efforts to raise the bar on safety. Blacklists alone are not the answer. IATA encourages Europe to incorporate IOSA in their approach. It is a transparent measure of an airline's safety management capabilities. As the European Union Aviation Safety Committee examines its next steps, IOSA must be a part of the consideration.

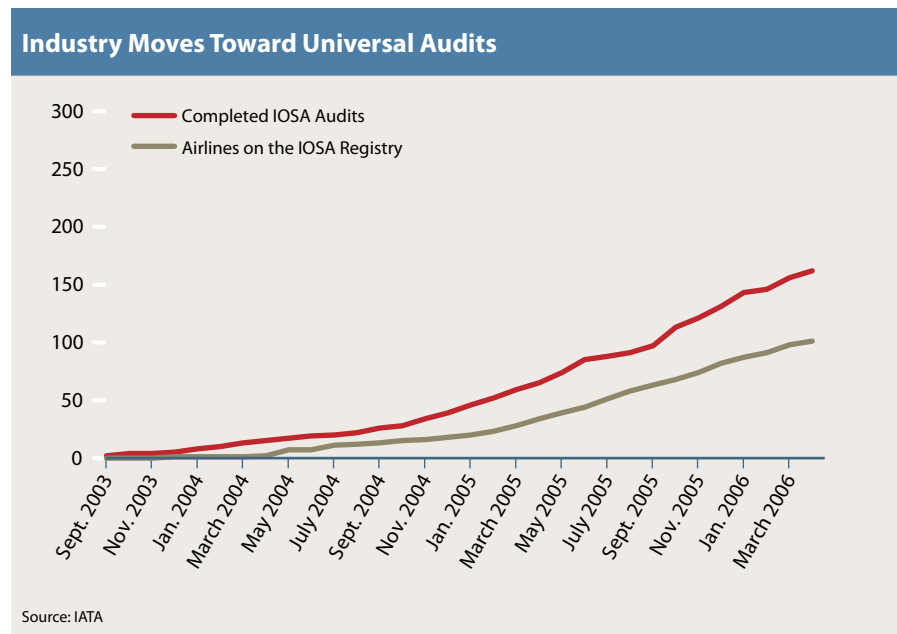
Partnership for Safety

For some airlines, IOSA will be a real challenge. There is no denying that the standards are tough. To help facilitate the leap for carriers with the greatest need, there is the IATA Partnership for Safety (Pfs) program. Following a successful

2005 launch in Africa, where the accident rate is 12 times the global average, the Pfs has been expanded to include Latin America. The aim of the program is to help airlines in developing nations reach IOSA standards by providing awareness training, gap analysis and technical support. IATA is funding this initiative with a US\$3 million investment. Manufacturers such as CFM and Pratt & Whitney also are providing funding and support.

On the Right Track

The safety commitment of all parties of the industry — governments, airlines and suppliers — has made air transport the safest mode of transportation. But the right to claim this great achievement must be won with every flight. Global standards and harmonization are the pillars of success. While being completely committed to further improvements in safety, we must also look to export our successful approach to other critical parts of the airline business that could also benefit from greater cooperation among stakeholders. Security comes to mind . . . ●



Source: IATA
Figure 1