

### Convictions Denounced

Flight Safety Foundation, the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) and the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) have criticized the prosecution and conviction of two air traffic controllers on duty at the time of a near midair collision of two Japan Airlines aircraft. A Japanese court also imposed prison sentences on the two controllers but suspended the sentences.

"The prosecution and conviction of these two air traffic controllers in a situation where there was no intent of wrongdoing is contrary to international best practices for aviation safety and the principles of a just culture," the three organizations said in a joint statement.

The incident, which occurred Jan. 31, 2001, over Yaizu, involved a Boeing 747 on a flight from Tokyo to Okinawa and a McDonnell Douglas DC-10 en route from Busan, South Korea, to Tokyo. Published reports said that nine people in the 747



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received serious injuries when the captain pushed the airplane into a dive to avoid the DC-10; the flight crews had received conflicting instructions from air traffic control and their traffic-alert and collision avoidance systems.

### ATC Simulation

Eurocontrol has conducted a large-scale real-time simulation involving three air traffic control centers to evaluate new airspace and route scenarios.

The AMRUFRA project — named for the Amsterdam, Ruhr and Frankfurt areas affected — was conducted in April. It involved 25 air traffic controllers and both civil and military operators.

The simulation was designed to examine the effects on airspace organization of the opening of a new runway at Germany's Frankfurt Airport. The runway was expected to increase traffic not only at Frankfurt but also at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in the Netherlands and to increase the complexity of routings and procedures in the area, including the Ruhr Valley in Germany, Eurocontrol said.

The simulation was intended to evaluate "not only the expected benefit of the changes in capacity and safety but also the benefits on efficiency for the airspace users, as well as efficiency from the air traffic controller's perspective," Eurocontrol said.



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### EASA Plans Advance Audits

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) plans to institute a "proactive advance audit" beginning in 2009 for operators that plan to fly their aircraft into Europe.

EASA Executive Director Patrick Goudou told a meeting of the Royal Aeronautical Society that operators that fail audits will be barred from entering European airspace.

If an approved foreign operator violates international safety standards, EASA's approval to operate in European airspace can be withdrawn, Goudou said. In these cases, the operator will automatically be placed on EASA's blacklist "until we are convinced it is safe again," he said.

The European Union first published its blacklist in 2006 as a means of publicly identifying operators that do not meet international safety standards and therefore would not be permitted to land their aircraft at European airports.

Goudou said that the safety audit "guarantees the necessary technical safety assessment" of foreign operators, while the blacklist "ensures citizens are properly informed about our actions."

## Improved Safety Inspections Sought

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is implementing a program to monitor inspections being conducted by its field offices and to alert key FAA personnel if a safety inspection is overdue.

The program is one of several measures that Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters says are intended to improve the FAA safety inspection program and to minimize travel disruptions that result from airline decisions to ground aircraft. Peters also authorized an independent review team to develop recommendations by early August to improve the aviation safety system. Team members include Ambassador Edward W. Stimpson, chairman of the Flight Safety Foundation Board of Governors, and Hon. Carl W. Vogt, a former Board of Governors chairman. Other members are J. Randolph Babbitt, an aviation and labor consultant and a member of the ASW Editorial Advisory Board; William O. McCabe, president of an aerospace consulting firm and a member of the Foundation's Board of Governors; and Malcolm K. Sparrow, a professor of public management at Harvard University.

Peters' announcements followed the cancellation of about 3,000 flights by American Airlines in early April so that

the airline could conduct FAA-required inspections of aircraft wiring and an earlier report that Southwest Airlines had been permitted to operate aircraft that had not undergone required safety inspections in 2007.

Peters said that although the FAA's handling of safety oversight has been sound and delivered "decisive results," the circumstances surrounding the missed inspections made clear that "a good system can always be made better." The actions that she has ordered will "help make inspectors and managers more accountable, keep airlines focused on safety and minimize disruptions for travelers," she said.

In a related matter, a report by the Transportation Department's inspector general said that officials in the Dallas-Fort Worth Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) facility had misclassified airspace errors to blame pilots for mistakes that should have been attributed to controllers. The misclassifications involved 62 air-traffic events between November 2005 and July 2007.

In response, the FAA removed the TRACON manager and assistant manager from their positions, "pending a final determination on possible further personnel actions," and said that it would



U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

take steps to strengthen the reporting system used to classify airspace errors.

Hank Krakowski, chief operating officer of the FAA Air Traffic Organization, said he was "deeply disturbed" by the inspector general's findings.

"The safety of the traveling public is our top priority and will not be compromised," Krakowski said. "The intentional distorting of reporting incidents defeats our ability to understand the root causes of errors and enact mitigation if we see a trend developing. Aside from the integrity issue, it's a lost opportunity to gain insight into causal factors."

The FAA will take steps to prevent similar misclassifications at other facilities nationwide, he said.

## Safety Plateau?

A survey of about 140 aviation professionals has found that most expect no improvement in airline safety over the next five years. The survey by Ascend, an aerospace consulting firm based in London, found that 56 percent expect that the safety level will stay the same or worsen during the "near to medium term." More than half of the respondents said that they are directly responsible for safety.

The industry has recorded consistent improvements in safety for more than 60 years, but respondents said that the greatest threat to safety is "a shortage of experienced personnel." Other concerns were "fatigue/work practice" and "airline management experience/attitudes/culture."

"Management accountability for safety" was ranked as the most important factor in improving safety, followed by "improvements in aircraft technology" and "increased sharing of safety data/analysis."



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**‘Bright Future’ for African Aviation**

A collaborative initiative advanced by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) likely will accelerate safety improvements in African aviation, Roberto Kobeh González, president of the ICAO Council, says.

González told a meeting of the ICAO Air Transport Symposium in Abuja, Nigeria, that safety is an essential condition for the growth of the aviation industry in Africa. He said that he expects ICAO’s Comprehensive Regional Implementation Plan for Aviation Safety in Africa (the AFI Plan) to accelerate the spread of aviation safety across the continent.

In the years before development of the AFI Plan, he said, “many well-intentioned efforts ... were either too

often uncoordinated or perhaps insufficient and inappropriate. The AFI Plan corrects the trajectory by adopting the strategy and methodology contained in ICAO’s performance-based Global Aviation Safety Plan and the industry’s Global Aviation Safety Roadmap” both of which “concentrate on activities with the highest return for improving safety,” González said.

Safety and the liberalization of the air transport sector are two conditions most likely to speed the growth of the air transport industry in Africa, he said.

“Air transport on the continent holds tremendous potential for growth



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and economic development by fostering trade and foreign investments, yet at the moment it remains relatively small, compared to those of other continents. The challenge lies in bridging the gap between the realities of today and the promises of tomorrow,” Gonzalez said.

**Controllers See Global Staffing Shortages**

Worldwide shortages of air traffic controllers have increased reliance on controllers working significant amounts of overtime — a situation that is “neither safe nor sustainable,” the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers’ Associations (IFATCA) says.

IFATCA’s conclusions were based on a survey of its member associations. Their perceptions of safety issues differed significantly from those of many air navigation service providers, especially in the areas involving staffing levels.

IFATCA estimates the shortage at about 3,000 controllers and attributes the problem to several factors, including the failure of the profession to attract

new trainees, the willingness and ability of air navigation service providers to conduct sufficient training, the aging of the current work force, major new initiatives that require extra staffing by controllers, reliance on overtime to conduct “normal” operations and the rapid expansion of infrastructure caused by booming Asian economies.

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**In Other News ...**

The first group of aviation safety inspectors from Indonesia has completed a **training session** in Australia as part of a three-year bilateral assistance package. The agreement calls for the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia to provide training for up to 40 Indonesian aviation safety inspectors each year. ... Representatives of Europe’s general aviation community have held the first meeting of the European General Aviation Safety Team (EGAST), which was established to promote **best practices** and improve safety in general aviation. ... The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board is proposing an amendment to its regulations to provide for the investigation of accidents involving **unmanned aircraft systems** (ASW, 12/07, p. 42).

**Correction** ... In the May issue, an incorrect credit appeared with the photograph of modern-day London City Airport on p. 18. The photo credit should have read: Ercan Karakas/ JetPhotos.net.

*Compiled and edited by Linda Werfelman.*