

# DOING THE Right Thing

Over the past couple of years, I have used this column to shine light on the threat that aviation safety faces from a lack of political will in certain parts of the world. Often, it is very hard to do the right thing due to pressure from governments, growth or even difficulty in hiring enough qualified people. These are serious problems, and all the safety professionals in the industry need to shine a light on them so that solutions can be found.

Every once in a while, we see courageous political action taken. In past columns, I have talked about the courage of Maimuna Taal of the Republic of The Gambia and the dedication she has shown to aviation safety. Today, I'm shifting my focus to two countries in Southeast Asia that recently grounded unsafe airlines despite — and because of — some of the problems mentioned above.

Indonesia has suffered several terrible airplane crashes over the past few years, with tragic loss of life. We know that the government was looking for solutions but was running into problems such as a shortage of qualified pilots and maintenance personnel, and sometimes a shortage of resources to thoroughly investigate aviation incidents.

Rather than continue to allow unsafe airlines to operate, the Transport Ministry of Indonesia recently conducted safety audits and shut down five airlines based on the audit results. This was a very good decision, and we at Flight Safety Foundation applaud the action. Indonesia has a rapidly growing population and an increasing demand for air services. When a government makes strong, assertive moves such as the shutdowns, we are much more confident that it takes safety seriously and will continue to improve its record.

Thailand, another country struggling with population growth and having a healthy economy fueling a growing demand for air services, suffered a fatal crash in Phuket a year ago that brought international attention to the safety of aviation in that country.

The Thai Civil Aviation Department announced in July that it had grounded One-Two-Go, revoking its air operator certificate. The airline had violated many operating, maintenance and safety regulations, and was further hampered by a lack of proper airline management. In addition, the department revoked the flying licenses of seven foreign pilots and suspended the licenses of two Thai pilots when it discovered that they had falsified their qualifications.

Episodes like these are frightening in conjuring images of other disasters that might have happened, but also heartening because the governments have taken the strong, proactive steps needed to ensure a safe aviation industry.

As important as it is for Flight Safety Foundation to highlight its concerns about aviation safety in certain parts of the world, it is just as important to shine the light on the regulators and governments that are making the tough decisions and doing the right thing. There is still a distance to go for parts of Southeast Asia to achieve the safety record they should have, but these are big and important steps for Indonesia and Thailand.



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