

Aviation Human Factors Industry News

January 14, 2009

Vol. V. Issue 1

First some good news

1.5 billion people fly without a single fatality

During the last two years, 1.5 billion passengers in the US and Canada have taken to the skies in airliners. There was only one major accident within that period -- **the crash of Continental Flight 1404**, that ran off a Denver International Airport runway last month.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor and risk statistician Arnold Barnett said, *"It's a new record. While it doesn't mean risk is now non-existent, it certainly means they have done a fantastic job at keeping all these threats at bay."*

Bill Voss, president of the Flight Safety Foundation, said, *"It's just more evidence of what has been the improving safety record that we've seen over the past several years."*

Voss said the crash of Flight 1404 helps illustrate why death rates have fallen, as increased government safety requirements during recent years have rendered airliners more likely to withstand violent impacts and fires, reducing the probability of passenger deaths, USA Today reported.

Voss added that improved technology, increased aircraft reliability and better pilot training have also contributed significantly to a reduction in airline accidents.

Now some bad news

French Concorde Crash Manslaughter Trial To Begin In Feb 2010

PARIS (AFP)--The trial of U.S. airline Continental Airlines Inc. (CAL) and two of its employees for manslaughter over the crash of a Concorde airliner in 2000 will start in February next year, prosecutors said Monday.

A former French civil aviation official and two senior members of the Concorde program will be tried on the same charge before a criminal court in Pontoise, outside Paris.



The New York-bound Concorde crashed in a ball of fire shortly after takeoff from Paris Charles de Gaulle airport on July 25, 2000, killing all 109 people on board and four workers on the ground.

The trial of Continental Airlines and the five defendants will open Feb. 2, 2010, the Pontoise prosecutor said.

A French accident inquiry concluded in December 2004 the disaster was partly caused by a strip of metal that fell on the runway from a Continental Airlines DC-10 plane that took off just before the supersonic airliner. The Concorde ran over the super-hard titanium strip, which shredded one of its tires, causing a blowout and sending debris flying into an engine and a fuel tank.

Continental Airlines is charged over a **failure to properly maintain the aircraft** along with two U.S. employees: John Taylor, a mechanic who allegedly fitted the non-standard strip, and airline chief of maintenance Stanley Ford. The former Concorde officials and French aviation boss are also accused of failing to detect and set right faults on the supersonic aircraft.

Henri Perrier was director of the first Concorde program at Aerospatiale, now part of the EADS group, from 1978 to 1994, while Jacques Herubel was Concorde's chief engineer from 1993 to 1995.

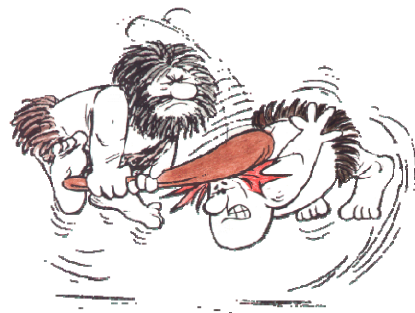
Both men are accused of ignoring warning signs from prior incidents on the Concorde, which suffered 67 tire blowouts or wheel damage during its 27 years of service, piercing the fuel tanks in seven cases.

Finally Claude Frantzen, director of technical services at the civil aviation authority DGAC from 1970 to 1994, is accused of overlooking a fault on Concorde's distinctive delta-shaped wings, which held its fuel tanks.

Manslaughter charges filed against five people

Cypriot prosecutors filed charges in court on Tuesday against five people for a 2005 plane crash which killed 121 people in Greece's worst air disaster.

The Helios Airways Boeing 737-300 was traveling from Larnaca in Cyprus to Prague when it crashed north of Athens on August 14 2005, killing everyone on board.



In documents submitted to Cyprus courts on Tuesday, public prosecutors listed charges of **manslaughter and causing death through negligence**.

Prosecution officials said five people were named in the documents. Their identities were not publicly disclosed.

"Indictments will be delivered and the date set for the individuals to respond is February 26," Cyprus's deputy attorney-general Akis Papasavvas said. "The charges concern two of the three most serious offences under the Cyprus penal code."

Failure to switch a valve regulating oxygen supply to the aircraft knocked its pilots and most of the passengers unconscious shortly after the plane took off from Larnaca, investigators found.

The aircraft glided on autopilot in Greek air space for two hours before it ran out of fuel and crashed into a hillside.

A flight attendant with a trainee pilot's license, probably the only person conscious on the plane, took the controls and tried in vain to avert the disaster. He was spotted in the cockpit by Greek air force pilots scrambled to trail the Boeing.

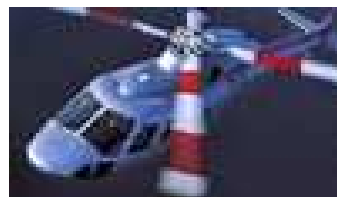
An inquiry by Greek authorities published in October 2006 cited perceived **deficiencies** in the **safety culture** of the airline.

Under Cyprus law, manslaughter carries a maximum jail term of life, and death through negligence or reckless behavior four years.

The airline has since shut down.

First Lawsuit Surfaces In Wake Of PHI S-76 Crash **Wrongful Death Suit Accuses Company Of Negligence**

Although the accident investigation is far from over, the widow of a victim of last week's crash of a PHI Sikorsky S-76 helicopter is suing helo operator PHI.



Britain Boudreaux, the estranged wife of the late Allen Boudreaux, is proceeding with a wrongful death suit against PHI, Inc., accusing the company of negligence, the Lafayette, LA Daily Advertiser reported.

Boudreaux's attorney, William Dodd, said, "All reports and information I have, the weather was not a factor," Dodd said. "It's got to be something mechanical or it's got to be pilot error."

As ANN reported, at approximately 2:09 pm (CST) on January 4, a Sikorsky S-76C helicopter operated by PHI, Inc., crashed into swampy terrain just north of the Gulf of Mexico coastline near Morgan City, LA.

The aircraft was on a Part 135 revenue flight to oil platform number 301B. It had taken off from Amelie, Louisiana about 7 minutes before the crash. There were no radio reports of problems from the crew before the crash. Weather at the time is reported to have been visual flight rule conditions, with scattered clouds at 1,000 feet and 10 miles visibility.

An Emergency Locating Transmitter (ELT) emitted a signal following the crash and helped search and rescue personnel find the wreckage. Eight of the nine persons aboard perished, with the lone survivor listed in critical condition.

The National Transportation Safety Board is continuing its investigation of the crash. The wreckage of the aircraft has been transported to Lafayette, LA for detailed examination, and its cockpit voice recorders have been sent to NTSB facilities in Washington, DC for analysis, NTSB spokesman Ted Lopatkiewicz said.

Report: Cessna To Slash 2,000 More Jobs Scope Of Layoffs Not Yet Known

...And the hits just keep coming. Cessna told its employees Monday it will cut 2,000 additional jobs throughout its facilities, putting a number to **its announcement last week of a second round of layoffs.**



The Associated Press reports Jim Walters, head of human resources for the company, announced the cuts in an email sent throughout Cessna's network.

"These actions are regrettable, but necessary to ensure our long-term stability and success," Walters wrote. "As always, we remain committed to keep you informed of the processes and next steps as we work through this difficult time."

Company spokesman Robert Stangarone said workers will receive 60-day notices over the next few weeks, with the layoffs effective in March. The planemaker will also make a second request to its workers to accept voluntary layoff programs.

"These are particularly difficult times and it is very painful to lose so many great team members, and unfortunately we must take these steps to protect the future of our company," Stangarone said.

The AP notes Cessna currently employs 12,000 people in Wichita, with an additional 1,300 employees at its Independence, KS plant and more at facilities in Columbus, GA and Bend, OR. Cessna also has a facility in Chihuahua, Mexico.

Stangarone couldn't comment on the distribution of the layoffs. "Right now we are just saying across Cessna. We are not being any more specific than that.

"Anybody who is in Wichita certainly sees what is happening with the economy and industry," Stangarone added. "They are pretty well aware of the situation we are in."

Jet fuel spills at Seattle airport

SEATAC, Wash. (AP) — About 1,000 gallons of jet fuel spilled from a plane at Sea-Tac Airport when a fuel line ruptured during maintenance.

Airport spokesman Perry Cooper says mechanics were working on a Hawaiian Airlines jet at Gate B-5 when they had a problem about 2 a.m. with a valve on the left wing.

The two mechanics were checked by Port of Seattle fire department medics and were unharmed.

Cooper says firefighters used hoses to flush the fuel into the airport's drainage system that goes through filtering and treatment ponds.

The spill was cleaned up in about an hour. There were no delays in airport operations.

Launch Of Pay-As-You-Fly South African Airline Delayed

No Planes + No Air Operator Certificate = No Flights

A new South African airline sporting a new pay-as-you-fly twist on airfares has run into problems getting off the ground.



Airtime Airlines' plan is similar to the concept of pay-as-you-go cellphones. Passengers purchase tickets in blocks of minutes -- called iFLY Airtime -- which can be "topped-up" at any time. The value of the minutes can be maximized by purchasing a top-up when rates are lower.

Flights are therefore charged in minutes, with a set number of minutes between cities. For instance, a flight from Durban to Johannesburg is rated at 75 minutes. If you bought minutes at R5 each (five Rand, about 51 cents US), the flight ends up costing R375 (about \$38 US).

"You can top-up with iFLY Airtime, then make a booking within 90 days and fly within 365 days of your top-up. If you don't book a flight with your iFLY Airtime, you will get a cellphone airtime top-up voucher for the full value of your purchase," the airline's website explains.

Ticket sales for Airtime were to commence January 4, with route flights slated to begin January 18. However, the startup has encountered a couple of hitches - Airtime's deal to lease a fleet of airliners fell through, and it doesn't have government certification to operate.

South African Civil Aviation Authority spokeswoman Phindiwe Gwebu said, "We have not received a formal application from the airline. We have therefore not issued them with their air operator certificate."

Johannesburg's The Times reports that negotiations between Blackbird Aerospace Corporation, the owner of Airtime Airlines, and Air Aquarius for the lease of three Boeing 737-200's have run aground. The deal also would have allowed Airtime to operate legally under Air Aquarius' license and operator certificate.