

MEDIA STATEMENT

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South African air cargo security systems get the nod from the EU and USA

Johannesburg, 04-08-2014. The South African air cargo security systems have received the nod from the European Union (EU) as well as the United States' Transport Security Administration (TSA). The announcement was made by the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA), a Department of Transport entity tasked with regulating aviation safety and security through oversight that is in line with international standards.

According to Ms Poppy Khoza, who heads the SACAA as Director of Civil Aviation, the two affirmations place South Africa in a unique position, making the country the only one on the continent with such recognition and agreements in place. "This essentially means that, following audits by the European Union and the United States, South Africa is acknowledged as one of the countries where the level of aviation security is regarded as robust and reliable. This will benefit air carriers operating between South Africa and the two regions."

In the case of the United States (US), the Transport Security Administration carries out yearly assessments of South Africa's aviation security regime with the last audit conducted in June 2014. The results of the audit indicate that South Africa did not attract any findings or observation and in some instances the standards were found to be higher than in previous years.

"The TSA audit comes after almost a year since the SACAA and the TSA concluded a recognition agreement on air cargo security programmes, thus acknowledging that South African systems are on par with the stringent requirements of the USA. This agreement also enhances air cargo security measures and initiatives between the two countries. Most significantly, the agreement enables quicker facilitation of goods between the two countries, and helps eradicate duplicative or redundant measures while still ensuring the highest levels of security that both the TSA and the SACAA require," Khoza explained.

The EU recognition means that South Africa has been included on the list of third countries where air carriers are exempted from the application of the ACC3 (*Air cargo and mail carrier operation into the EU from a third country airport*) regime of which the requirements are viewed as stringent to operators from countries outside the EU. In terms of the ACC3 process, carriers wishing to carry cargo into the EU have to request an ACC3 status, and this process requires rigorous screening of air cargo or the existence of a properly functioning and secure air cargo system. As of 1 July 2014, cargo operators flying to the EU destinations must therefore either hold a valid EU validation report, proving that they have adequate security measures in place, or in the absence of such assurance, cargo operators will have to use the services of EU validators to pronounce their cargo as secured. The services of EU validators are not free and come at a cost to air carriers. The EU recognition essentially simplifies air cargo security processes significantly, by lessening the duplication of measures. It further acknowledges that security measures applied in South Africa and the EU are equivalent.

“This recognition by the EU is a significant milestone for the country and South African carriers, as this means that they can now benefit from an exemption from the ACC3 regime, provided that the level of risk remains similarly low, commensurate with a robust oversight system being in place. SACAA works closely with the industry to ensure that we maintain this level. As such, airlines will be absolved from paying the costs involved in validation exercises,” Khoza elaborated.

The EU risk assessment mechanism is based on criteria that take into account the elements of threats and vulnerability as well as the level of compliance with the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) as set out by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The EU conducts continuous review and analysis on the basis of which the ACC3 exemption has been granted.

“These recognitions confirm our commitment towards being recognised as one of the best regulators in terms of aviation safety and security. The SACAA and the local aviation industry role-players will continue to work hand-in-hand to ensure continuous compliance with global standards,” Khoza said.

South Africa, through the SACAA, co-chairs the ICAO’s Aviation Security Panel Working Group on air cargo security. Further, in March 2014, the SACAA was appointed, unopposed, as the vice-chair of the ICAO Aviation Security Panel for the second year in succession.

“These two positions clearly attest to the fact that South Africa is held in high regard by its global peers on matters concerning aviation security,” Khoza asserted.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority ("SACAA") is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) ("the Act"). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board ("the Board"). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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