

MEDIA STATEMENT

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PROBE INTO A RECENT LANDING BY A SMALL AIRCRAFT AT OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CONTINUES

Director of Civil Aviation Urges Investigators to Leave no Stone Unturned

[*Johannesburg*] The investigation into the unusual landing of a small aircraft at South Africa's busiest airport, i.e. OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA), on Thursday, 29 August 2019 is picking up momentum. This is according to a team of investigators comprising inspectors from the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) and investigators from the Accident and Incident Investigations Division - an independent unit tasked with investigating aircraft accidents and serious incidents on behalf of the Department of Transport.

"While we are grateful that this was a non-fatal incident, which we view as bizarre, worrying, and an extremely dangerous act, we are resolute that we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that those responsible are held accountable. All facts, evidence, and sequence of events and or decisions by all involved will be interrogated thoroughly," said Ms Poppy Khoza, who leads the SACAA as the Director of Civil Aviation.

The incident in question relates to a private flight involving a small aircraft called RV-10, which is a four-seat, single-engine, low-wing, amateur built airplane sold in kit form. In line with the SACAA's classification, the aircraft is regarded as experimental, and is mainly used for recreational purposes.

The departure point of this South African registered aircraft was the Free State Province's New Tempe Airport, and the intended point of landing was OR Tambo International Airport.

According to the preliminary information at our disposal, this was a private flight, and the aircraft was carrying three (3) people on board, i.e. two (2) passengers and a pilot who holds a Private Pilot's Licence.

Private Pilot's Licence holders are not authorised to conduct any commercial operations.

The aircraft landed at OR Tambo International Airport at approximately 13:25.

“Even though the aircraft did not sustain any damage, and no injuries to persons on board or on the ground were reported, what is very strange is the fact that the pilot landed the aircraft on a taxiway instead of a runway,” Khoza elaborated.

A taxiway is a route along which an aircraft can taxi when moving to or from a runway.

“Many questions still need to be answered in order to arrive at a factual conclusion as to what led to this hazardous incident. It should not have happened, and it must surely never happen again. Moreover, this act has security implications as only passengers and personnel that have been screened or have the necessary authorisation are allowed on the airside of the airport. This investigation is being treated as a priority and must be concluded as soon as possible, as the incident has a direct bearing on aviation safety and security. South Africa holds an impeccable aviation safety and security record, and therefore, we will not allow anyone to undermine the safety and security of passengers and crew, which is why we shall do all possible to avoid a repeat of the similar incident” Khoza concluded.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is a Schedule 3A public entity reporting to the Department of Transport established in terms of the Civil Aviation Authority Act, 2009 (Act No 13 of 2009) (the Act). 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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