

MEDIA RELEASE

20 AUGUST 2008

SACAA responds to false allegations in the Beeld newspaper

The South African Civil Aviation Authority is issuing this statement as a response to claims made in the Beeld newspaper of 19 August 2008 under the heading “SA pilots’ grading scrutinized” and the same version covered in other related publications. The statements contained in this publication state that the SACAA could be facing a possible downgrade by the FAA. These are simply false allegations that may only seek to damage the image of the SACAA and that of the country. In fact, the SACAA underwent an audit by the Federal Aviation Administration last year, and the final outcome confirmed in January that we were compliant with all international standards and that we had maintained our Category 1 status. The follow-up visit (not an audit) that took place at the end of July was to monitor progress on training and other initiatives that had taken place in the intervening 6 month period.

As a leading aviation nation on the sub-continent, the FAA was keen to see whether we had achieved our stated goal of not only being compliant with International standards, but rather far exceeding the minimum requirements. They left satisfied that we had now indeed achieved our goal. They further indicated that should we continue at the current levels, we would not be subjected to frequent audits in terms of the FAA risk management model.

The mandate of the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is to regulate the civil aviation industry by controlling, promoting and regulating safety and security within the industry whilst ensuring and overseeing the development and functioning of the same.

The SACAA achieves this through various ways e.g. by developing relevant legislation that supports and ensures that we deliver on this mandate and by overseeing all personnel and operators within the industry to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and standards. South Africa is a signatory state to the ICAO Convention of 1944 and it is therefore expected to meet its international obligations in terms the International Civil Aviation Organization’s (ICAO)

The SACAA also received notification from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the United States of America that the authority would be subjected to an International Aviation Safety Audit Programme (IASA) audit at the end of July/beginning of August 2007. With the two audits being weeks apart the SACAA had to ensure that we satisfy the requirements of the FAA which are based on ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices as well. This was a testing time for the authority, one which both the SACAA management and the Department of Transport were intent on addressing as a matter of urgency. Even though the initial report by the FAA indicated deficiencies in our system, the authority was determined to address all of these and this was included in the Corrective Action Plan submitted to the FAA. These deficiencies included issues such as skills shortages and structural changes that could be made to ensure a more efficient carrying out of the national and international mandate.

We are happy to report that at the end of 2007 the Minister of Transport issued a directive for the positions of CEO and Commissioner for Civil Aviation to be merged with immediate effect and this resulted in the appointment of the current incumbent Captain Colin Jordaan. The SACAA embarked on an intensive recruitment drive which has resulted in about 80 new technical appointments being made up to July 2008. This process is obviously not exhausted as yet and recruitment is still underway. We have recorded 100% capacity in areas such as Airworthiness and 90% in areas such as Flight Operations which required pilot inspectors mainly. We are however pleased to announce that with the current capacity we are able to fulfill our mandate as required.

It is with disappointment that we note that the journalist who wrote the story in the Beeld and in News 24, regarding the skills shortage at the SACAA and the downgrading of the same, did so without verifying the facts with the SACAA first. He simply extracted contextual background written by the editor of SA Flyer out of an article in that publication and reported this as factual, with disregard for the timelines and accuracy of the information.

The SACAA wishes to limit our comments on this matter to what is contained in this press statement as we believe that it gives a clear and concise message on the correct facts regarding this matter. Further to this, we would also like to assure the South African public that we take our mandate seriously and we do everything in our power to ensure that our skies remain as safe as they have been since commercial aviation activity started in this country.

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