

MEDIA STATEMENT

21st January 2010

SACAA Gives SA Airlink Jetstream Aircraft Fleet Green Light to Operate

On the 23rd December 2009, the SACAA suspended the certificates of airworthiness of the Jetstream aircraft fleet as a result of safety concerns that included a series of aircraft incidents and accidents as well as the on-going safety audit at SA Airlink. The SACAA indicated at the time, that it would be necessary to conduct individual aircraft inspections on the Jetstream aircraft fleet before any upliftment of the said suspensions could be considered.

The SACAA would like to confirm that such aircraft inspections commenced on the 1st January 2010 and resulted in comprehensive aircraft inspections being undertaken, which included an intensified safety audit of the SA Airlink maintenance planning and quality systems. This comprehensive auditing approach resulted in the SACAA assessing the entire maintenance planning and quality system of SA Airlink, checking it for integrity and completeness. Emanating from this process, SACAA inspectors have successfully completed inspections on the first three (3) Jetstream aircraft and have re-issued them with the necessary approvals to commence operating.

During this intensified aircraft inspection process, both SA Airlink and the SACAA interacted with the engine manufacturer, Honeywell, who in turn conducted a detailed analysis of the engine technical problems that had affected SA Airlink in recent times. A comprehensive document, called the “white paper” was submitted to SACAA by Honeywell, which gave a detailed analysis of the risks associated with the engine problems alluded to above. The recommendation of the Honeywell white paper indicates that the safety analysis of aircraft engines installed on the SA Airlink Jetstream is still within acceptable risk levels. Nevertheless, the engine manufacturer has already embarked on a program to redesign the engine rotating air seal plate on the global fleet, in order to further improve the safety levels.

SACAA would like to confirm that the analysis and justification presented by Honeywell seems to be sufficient in addressing the safety concerns related to the serviceability of the aircraft engine in question.

During the in-depth inspections of the 3 Jetstream aircraft, a number of areas of non-compliance with the Regulations were identified and these were immediately rectified by the operator on all the aircraft in the Jetstream fleet. After analysing substantial amount of data obtained during the inspection process from the aircraft and engine manufacturers and the operator, the SACAA Airworthiness Department is of the view that it has enough evidence to verify the reliability and airworthiness of the aircraft type in question.

More importantly, the SACAA was able to verify that the mandatory maintenance inspections required to be undertaken on the fleet were indeed performed as required by both the aircraft and engine manufacturers and in compliance with the applicable Civil Aviation Regulations. It is important to highlight the fact that SA Airlink has been subjected to an extensive and comprehensive auditing process of huge magnitude since 7 December 2009. Notwithstanding the findings mentioned above, the SACAA is satisfied that SA Airlink has been able to demonstrate an acceptable level of compliance with regards to the airworthiness status of its Jetstream aircraft fleet.

Having taken into account the above considerations, the Commissioner for Civil Aviation has taken the decision, in principle, to uplift the suspension of the certificates of airworthiness for the rest of the SA Airlink Jetstream aircraft fleet with effect from 21st January 2010, subject to the following condition;

- That SA Airlink will conduct certain aircraft maintenance inspections as prescribed by the SACAA on the remaining 11 aircraft and submit evidence that the inspections have been carried out as instructed.

The SACAA will still continue overseeing the full implementation of the Corrective Action Plan which was submitted by SA Airlink early in December 2009.

The SACAA would like to assure the members of the public that it regards its statutory mandate of ensuring aviation safety and security to be of paramount importance. As such, the aviation safety record in the country continues to demonstrate tremendous improvements as a result of the enhanced aviation safety and security oversight by the SACAA. The aircraft accidents statistics for the year 2009 speak volumes of the level of

aviation safety in the country. During the period January to December 2008, a total of **190** aircraft accidents were reported. The SACAA is glad to announce that during the period January to December 2009, only **125** aircraft accidents were reported, representing a reduction of **34.2%**. With regards to fatal accidents, a total of **33** were recorded in 2008 and only **16** were recorded in 2009, representing a reduction of **51.5%**. Pertaining to the number of fatalities, 2008 saw a total of **94** deaths resulting from aircraft accidents. This number reduced by **70.2%** in 2009 when only **28** deaths resulted from aircraft accidents.

In the last few years, the SACAA has been able to recruit highly skilled personnel in its inspectorate and management positions. As a result of having such a large complement of inspectors, the SACAA has greatly improved the integrity, quality, depth and scope of its audits and inspections, which have led to high levels of compliance by the aviation industry to the applicable Civil Aviation Regulations.

The SACAA remains confident that the aviation safety and security records in the country exceed the minimum standards and in fact compare favourably in terms of the best international standards and practice. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the USA subjected the SACAA to two comprehensive audits of its oversight system from mid July 2007 through to 2009. The results of these two audits revealed that the level of aviation safety and security in South Africa was rated amongst the best in the world.

As the country braces itself for hosting a successful and memorable Soccer World Cup later this year, the SACAA would like to assure members of the public that it will continue to effectively control, regulate and oversee the aviation industry in the country.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) was established on 1 October 1998 following the enactment of the South African Civil Aviation Authority Act, No.40, in September of the same year. The SACAA promotes and maintains 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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