



Editorial



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easyJet

A couple of years ago the easyJet pilot group (ePG) was cre-

ated. This is a cooperation between easyJet pilots based in the UK, Spain, Italy, France and Germany. They are represented by the local Member Associations from ECA, i.e. BALPA, SEPLA, IPA, SNPL and VC.

Pilots in the different countries have different legislations and different negotiation powers in their respective countries. Although every decision taken in the mainline has effects on all pilots, the easyJet management only wants to negotiate with the local representatives. For this reason ECA helped easyJet pilots with the creation of this group based on ECA protocol on Trans National Airlines (TNA). Every 4 months the ePG comes together to discuss the current issues in the air-line. This month I was invited to participate.

Unfortunately one of the difficulties they face is the rejection from the easyJet management to recognise this cooperation. It would be so much more efficient for the airline and the different local representatives if negotiations on issues that influence every local base were carried out centrally by the collective. This is the reason why the ePG was created. Not only for the benefit of the pilots but also for the easyJet group itself.

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Laser Illuminations: It's Time to Act!

Laser illuminations of aircraft have become increasingly common and can pose a real threat to their safety of operation and the passengers on board. ECA therefore welcomes the US Federal Aviation Administration initiative to interpret their current legislation in order to help authorities tackle attacks on aircraft by laser illumination. 'Shining a laser into the cockpit is not a joke' Randy Babbitt said, it will cost the offenders up to \$ 11,000. Every Federal State had different laws, if any at all. But now the FAA offers a common harmonised approach to offences in the US territory. A similar response is needed in Europe.

The current situation shows that very few European countries have specific legislation on unlawful laser illuminations. Some use their criminal or aeronautical codes; others do not feel competent at all to address these offences. Therefore the European Commission has to take the lead and propose a common European legislation.

While lasers are designed for use by professionals - who use this technology with appropriate safety measures - they can be purchased without any licence and misused. Some of these lasers are very powerful indeed. However, even the smallest when directed at the cockpit during the landing phase of a flight may cause distraction and seriously hinder the safe operation of the aircraft and can cause serious damage to the eyes of pilots.

In order to give an impetus to the legislative process, Eurocontrol will be organising a workshop between the 10th and 11th of October and will be supported by members of ECA's Security Working Group. This event aims to enhance the awareness of the safety risks generated by laser illuminations. In order to have a comprehensive overview of the situation Eurocontrol has invited laser manufacturers, users, police, justice departments, airports, airlines, pilots and air traffic controllers. ECA has great expectations and hopes that interested parties will agree to regulate this area to ensure an EU-

wide, effective protection and regulation against laser attacks.

Pilots victim of laser illuminations should follow these guidelines developed by the International Federation of Airlines Pilots' Associations - IFALPA:

Recommended actions in the event of laser illumination

- Look away from the laser beam and shield your eyes if possible.
- Determine if other crew members are also exposed. If not, consider handing over the control of the aircraft to the nonexposed crewmember.
- Engage the autopilot.
- Turn up the cockpit lights to minimise any further illumination effects.
- Inform ATC.
- Avoid rubbing of eyes (risk of inducing a corneal abrasion).
- Fill in an Air Safety Report (ASR).
- If any visual symptoms persist after landing, get an ophthalmologic examination.

For more information please consult the IFALPA medical briefing leaflet on 'The effects of laser illumination of aircraft': www.ifalpa.org/publications/briefing-leaflets/medical.html

It looks like management wants to divide the different local groups and by doing so they are creating mistrust among their employees. Fortunately, thanks to regular meetings in the ePG, the pilots remain connected and united. ECA calls upon the easyJet management to recognise the ePG and to negotiate with the ePG chairman who is elected by the local pilot groups in the 5 different countries.

Common issues that are of concern to the pilots include safety culture, training, promotions, social security changes in Europe, base transfers and future bases easyJet wants to open. Obviously in the future when easyJet opens more bases more member Associations will join the ePG.

During the meeting I attended I was impressed by the cooperation and commitment demonstrated by the pilots in the different easyJet local councils. ECA will continue to be involved in this good initiative and will do all that is in its power to get the recognition that this group deserves from the easyJet management. ■

Next Meetings

21-22 July: EASA EHSIT Specialist Team on OPS/SMS, IT

15-18 Aug.: ALPA-International Air Safety Forum, Washington, US

2 Sept.: Eurocontrol Runway Excursions Meeting, Brussels, BE

5 Sept.: ECA Safety Strategy Task Force, Brussels, BE

6-8 Sept.: IFALPA Aerodrome & Ground Environment Committee, Salzburg, AT

12-13 Sept.: ECA Executive Board Meeting, Brussels, BE

13 Sept.: EASA Safety Advisory Committee, Cologne, DE

14 Sept.: ECA Helicopter Working Group, Brussels, BE

15-16 Sept.: IFALPA Helicopter Committee, Brussels, BE

The **European Cockpit Association** is the association of Flight Crew Unions from European States. Based in Brussels, ECA has 38 Member Associations, representing over **38.600** pilots from 38 countries. For more information: www.eurocockpit.be.

Aviation Safety's Neglected Child: Helicopter Operations

3 months, 4 accidents, 13 fatalities... and this in Spain only. In Europe, since the beginning of the year, 74 helicopter accidents have occurred, resulting in a total of 43 fatalities. The figures speak for themselves; and yet, little seems to be done to improve helicopter safety. Could you imagine these statistics translated into fixed-wing commercial air transport? Do you think the governments would look passively at them? Of course not. Then, why is it that helicopter safety seems to attract so little attention from the decision-makers? It is time to act!



Picture by Carlos Ferreira

According to a study carried out by ASEPLA (the Spanish Pilots' Association), an average of 7 accidents per year occurred in Spain between 2000 and 2010 (68% of which in aerial work operations), with 4,45 fatalities (crew and passengers) on average per year. If these statistics were to be extrapolated to the 38,600 fixed-wing and rotary-wing pilots represented by ECA, it would mean that some 227 crew-members would die each year in Europe in air accidents.

And yet, these accidents do not make the headlines. Each day, hundreds of helicopter pilots go to work, many of

them to save lives (Search and Rescue, firefighting, Helicopter emergency medical services, etc.). But they do so at the risk of their own lives. Why? Because the governments and the European Union do not consider it as their priority. How many more fatalities do they need to realise that something is going wrong?

In 2011, Spain so far accounts for almost a third of all fatalities that have occurred in Europe as a result of helicopter accidents. For a long time, SEPLA has been ringing alarm bells about the lack of regulation and oversight of helicopter operations in Spain. The consequences of these lacks in the system are now being felt, at the detriment of crew and passengers' lives. ECA therefore strongly supports COPAC's (Official Guild of Commercial Aviation Pilots) and SEPLA's demand to the Spanish Authorities to urgently develop comprehensive rules for aerial works operations and ensure their effective oversight. ECA has also been active – and will continue to be so – at EU level to raise awareness about helicopter safety and the need for adequate safety regulations at national and EU level. ■



New Admin & Finance Director!

On 29 June, the ECA General Assembly elected Capt. Odd Haugsbak as Administrative & Finance Director. He took over from Timo Eckardt, who served for almost four years. Odd is Norwegian and was one of the drivers of ECA's restructuring in 2005. He was Admin & Finance Director in 2005-2007. We are pleased to welcome him back in the team!

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