



**For immediate release
31 July 2002**

"The weakest link in the Air Traffic Safety Chain" "The Human Being "

The members of IFATSEA wish to express our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the aircraft accident that occurred near Lake of Constance (Europe). No words can relieve the pain and grieve about the loss of so much young and innocent lives.

Our sympathies also go to our colleagues who strive for safety in the aviation industry. These Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers (ATCO) and Air Traffic Safety Electronics Personnel (ATSEP) have been confronted with the worst of their nightmares; a mid-air collision.

With this press release, IFATSEA wants to forward a clear and simple message; The weakest link in the Air Traffic Safety Chain is the Human Being. There can be no more excuse or delays in the strengthening of this chain.

In Brussels, April 2000, IFATSEA underlined that air traffic controllers were not the only critical element of the Air Traffic Management system. The technical staff (ATSEP) who work on the electronic systems that guide controllers and pilots also perform safety critical tasks which can lead directly or indirectly to air traffic delays, incidents and accidents.

The flying public and other aircraft users should expect and receive systems which are installed and maintained to the highest possible standards irrespective of which country they are flying over, or entering.

International standards are a necessity when dealing with more than one's own country and this is no more obvious than in areas of aviation.

The Media places great importance on the tasks and responsibilities of pilots and air traffic controllers. However the public's attention is rarely focused on the Engineers and Technicians who work day and night "behind the screens" to guarantee a safe and optimal Air Navigation System. Furthermore it must be underlined that Communications, Navigation, Surveillance / Air Traffic Management services are not "ancillary" to air safety, rather paramount..

In the IFATSEA Press release of October 2001 (Bratislava) after the the aircraft accident in Linate, Italy, our President, Gary Myers, stated that "There can be no compromise on safety." Although we realise the difficulties Air Traffic Providers and Regulators are facing, there can be no cutbacks that put the traveling public at risk.

IFATSEA has consistently argued for an independent certification authority which States may follow to design, install, commission and maintain Air Traffic Management systems. Such an authority, coupled with a program of licensing Engineering and Technical staff is essential to ensure that the safety of the traveling public is ensured.

Today we sincerely hope that it will be the last of our press releases triggered by a catastrophe of this magnitude.

IFATSEA represents some 30,000 aviation electronic specialists in over 40 countries. They install, maintain and monitor all systems, which communicate with and track aircraft. Without these aids, there would be no commercial aviation industry.

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