INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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Dr. Néstor Carlos Kırchner
Balcarce 50 Piso 1
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Buenos Aires
Argentina

Your Excellency:

Subsequent to recent written communication to your Office, the international Press and other organizations, the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) notes with regret the constant erosion of aviation safety in Argentina. We note also, the deterioration in relations between authorities and air traffic controller staff. In a separate correspondence our Federation expressed to you its grave concerns regarding the apparent lack of responsibility on the part of the Air Navigation Service Provider of your country in maintaining the standard and serviceability of the principal radar at Ezeiza, in accordance with international procedures. It would appear that the situation is rapidly deteriorating with the ability of your Government to maintain the required level of safety in the skies of Agentina and surrounding areas seriously compromised. We have received reports and documented cases of an apparent systematic breakdown within Argentine airspace to an unacceptable level, resulting primarily from the decision to delay the return to service of the essential radar equipment at Ezeiza. Our Federation feels compelled to comment once again on this apparent disregard for the basic principles of aviation safety, and disrespect of the travelling public.

The Federation finds it extremely unfortunate that instead of acting quickly and decisively to restore air traffic control services to a level consistent with international standards, authorities in Argentina have resorted to an unethical campaign of 'blame and retaliation' against air traffic controllers. Groundless, unsubstantiated reports that imply air traffic controllers from the Ezeiza tower are not safe and to then replace them with personnel who may be neither qualified nor current to operate in an ATC capacity does little to restore faith in the management abilities of responsible authorities. We wish to state clearly, our condemnation of the public accusations and identity disclosure of our colleagues working at Ezeiza levelled by your Minister of Defence. To imply that IFATCA has commented publicly about the dangerous situation in Argentina's airspace because ACTA is a member of our Federation is irresponsible, as is the implication that particular incidents such as runway incursions are intentionally orchestrated by skilled, highly-trained air traffic controllers. We wish to emphasise that IFATCA is not an industrial

union nor does it have any political links – its primary objectives are to promote aviation safety and safeguard the profession of air traffic control.

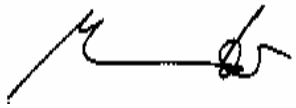
We take these unfounded accusations very seriously as in the past the publication of personal details of individuals has lead to tragic consequences. Such statements also contravene the spirit of the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Annex 13-*Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation*, which establishes: " that statements from persons, communications, medical and private information, cockpit voice recorders and transcripts, and opinions expressed in analysis of information shall not be made available for purposes other than for accident/incident investigation."

There also exists within the ICAO system a number of other provisions addressing the protection of certain sources of safety information. To openly criticize any single system component, be they an air traffic controller or otherwise, as the primary cause for conditions or events leading to an incident prior to an independent inquiry or investigation into circumstances surrounding the event is unacceptable conduct for a person holding public office. It is essential that controllers are able to perform their operational duties in a secure, stable environment free from external pressures. Those responsible authorities should be addressing the fact that a critical system component – the Ezeiza radar system, has been out of service since March of 2007.

Mr. President, the situation in Argentine airspace is very grave. We respectfully remind that States and Air Navigation Service Providers, if truly adopting a system-safety approach, have an obligation to guarantee the safety of not only their aviation system, but also the well being of operators within that system. It must be emphasised that all levels of an organization have a responsibility in today's safety culture with ultimate responsibility resting at the highest State level. We look to your positive influence, understanding and guidance to permit Argentina to once again enjoy a high level of respect in the aviation world. We support our colleagues and stand ready to offer any assistance in efforts to reach an understanding and reconciliation.

We look forward to an opportunity in the near future to announce to our membership that their colleagues in Argentina have been returned to their former positions providing safe, efficient air traffic control services utilising a reliable radar system.

Sincerely,



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