



COMMERCIAL AVIATION NEWS

MARCH/ APRIL 2009

OBITUARY:

Passing of Jeanette Rennie. *It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Jeanette Rennie. For those that don't know, Jeanette was for many years the manageress of the Grand Central Airport. Jeanette was an extremely active and committed member of AAA-SA and she will be sorely missed by the General Aviation community. RIP.*

Jeanette's Memorial Service is scheduled as follows:-

Date : Wednesday 11th March 2009
Time : 15: 30 pm
Venue : Grand Central Airport
Function Room

Please R.S.V.P. to Sarah, (011) 805-3166 or sarah@grandcentral.co.za no later than Tuesday, 10th March.

All are most welcome.

EDITORIAL

An interesting article appeared in the travel section of a recent newspaper, advising how to survive a plane crash. Two pieces of advice caught our eye.

Smoke inhalation was said to be one of the main causes of deaths in most survivable crashes, and even a few breaths that draw in smoke can result in loss of consciousness. It was suggested that a wet handkerchief, or other piece of material such as that covering the seat headrest, should be used to cover your nose and mouth. When no water is available use urine! This is a matter of life and death after all!

This raises the question of the provision of individual smoke masks to all passengers on board, - something that has been raised many times in the past, but should now receive serious attention. Or, do what a frequent flyer friend of ours does – buy your own!

On the subject of which are the safest seats to occupy, the exit seats are thought to be the best, although popular opinion has it that the rear seats are safer, or even those over the wings, supposedly because the plane is stronger in this area.

Boeing and the FAA claim that one seat is as safe as the rest, but in a recent survey of aircraft crashes since 1971 for which seat survival data is available, it was found that those seated in the rear (behind the trailing edge of the wing) were indeed safer. Survival rates in these were some 70%, as opposed to 56% over the wing, and 50% for those seated in the front.

All this assumes that the reaction to “negative panic”, whereby passengers remain seated and immobile as if in a trance, is quickly overcome.

While still on the subject of commercial flights, we have been trying to discover who are the lucky beneficiaries of the exorbitant “taxes” that are tacked on to the price of flights, especially international ones. For instance, certain travel agents advertise “specials” say for R2890 and in small print underneath “plus taxes and levies R3249”. Of this, the ACSA levy is about R150 and the fuel levy about R50, so where is the huge balance going to?

We have learned that there are five different types of taxes and levies and should any of our readers be able to throw some light on this anomaly we would love to hear from them.

Attached is the monthly Slipstream – a regular column on economic issues relevant to the Aviation Industry written by Dr Roelof Botha of the Gordon Institute of Business Science.

IN-HOUSE AFFAIRS

from the desk of the CEO, Kim Gorringe

Message from the CEO

This month I would like to briefly share with you what I consider to be two areas of concern that we as an industry need to address. These areas are (i) the lack (in some quarters) of technical input/advice by industry on issues crucial to the well being of General Aviation, and (ii) developments surrounding LA Mercy/Virginia Airport.

Lack of technical input by industry. The year 2009 is definitely going to be one of frenetic activity with respect to proposed changes to the aviation safety regulatory system. Recently, every CARCOM pack is crammed with proposals to amend the regulations. The reason for this proliferation in CARCOM proposals is, firstly, because there are still more than 400 ICAO standards that have to be incorporated into the regulations and, secondly, because the new management at the SACAA wishes to make changes to the structure and content of the regulations. Unfortunately, CAASA is encountering difficulties in furnishing comment and input on these proposals due to low levels of industry participation in the CAASA affiliated associations.

In order for CAASA to properly promote and protect the industry in CARCOM, we in turn need the industry experts to alert us to where problems and minefields lie in the proposed regulations. One of the reasons that the affiliates are not able to supply us with prompt and pertinent input is because they in turn do not have the resources to do so. And ultimately the cause of the affiliates not being equipped to furnish input is because the management of our General Aviation companies are not encouraging their employees to participate in the activities, meetings and workshops of HASA, AAA-SA, AMOSA, ANSO, ASAAT, BAASA and AATOSA.

I would therefore like to call on the management of all member companies to encourage and support their employees in participating in the activities of the affiliated associations so that we have the inputs we need to comment on the CARCOM proposals. I can assure you that by allowing an employee off work for a few hours a month to attend an affiliate EXCOM meeting or CAASA regulatory workshop will not be a waste of company time. Your company as well as the broader industry will ultimately reap the benefits thereof.

Developments surrounding LA Mercy/Virginia Airport. This week's consultative meeting with ATNS over the proposed re-location of the Durban General Flying Area from LA Mercy to the suggested area of Shongweni (see my report below) together with rumours emanating from Virginia regarding the proposed imposition of a noise curfew at the airport highlighted that all is not well at this GA Airport. Virginia is being threatened on two fronts. Firstly, the construction of the new King Shaka Airport requires a re-location of the General Flying Area and will mean that the control and use of the airspace at the new airport and Virginia will be "co-dependent".

Some even say that it would make it much easier for ACSA and ATNS, if Virginia Airport was no longer in the equation. The other threat to the airport comes from the residents of Durban North who complain about the noise pollution from the airport. These residents are putting pressure on the Durban City Council in the short term to impose a noise curfew at certain times and in the longer term to close down the airport. Unfortunately, in this whole dynamic, very little attention is being paid to the "grandfather rights" of the airport itself which was commissioned long before the suburb of Durban North rose up around it or plans to build King Shaka were put on the table.

There also does not seem to be any realisation on the side of the authorities as to the importance of Virginia to the General Aviation community of Kwazulu-Natal. I therefore believe that the time has come for the General Aviation community at Virginia to stand up for their rights as well as seek some answers from the Durban City Council and ACSA. Unreasonable curfew requirements should be opposed! A new, convenient and accessible location for the GF area must be found in consultation with the industry. Also, the Durban City Council needs to give a clear indication as to whether Virginia Airport is to remain or be relocated. If the Virginia Airport needs to move, a suitable alternative site for a new airport must be identified and an explanation given as to how the relocation costs are to be covered.

And lastly, the operator of LA Mercy, ACSA, needs to consult with General Aviation as to what General Aviation facilities are required at the new airport. CAASA will keep abreast of the situation at Virginia and assist the resident operators where it can.

CEO'S REPORT

AERODROME REGISTRATION WORKGROUP MEETING: 5 February

This Workgroup was convened by the SACAA to discuss the registration and regulation of all aerodromes in the Republic. A major issue up for discussion was the concerns of the recreational aviation sector regarding the SACAA plans to register un-licensed and unregistered airstrips. The fear is that this is just the first step towards regulating these strips.

The meeting realised that there are bylaws concerning nuisance values of airstrips that may affect the surrounding communities. In preparation for the following meeting, CAR Part 139 to be noted and recommendations made as to whether amendments should be made. Along with this proposal, was the advisory circular from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia concerning the regulation of aerodromes used in air transport. This is to be studied and an assessment made as to whether it is desirable to implement similar requirements in South Africa .

MANCOM MEETING: 11 February 2009

The following issues of importance were discussed-

Scarce and Critical Skills List. The NSDS indicators achieved by the Aerospace Chamber were discussed in detail. It was concluded that there were still targets that needed to be achieved such as the targeting of more SMME's with B-BBEE compliance.

Industry assistance. There was a request from the Aerospace Chamber for the nomination of subject matter experts onto the Technical Apprentice Committee. This Committee deals with the approval of logbooks for the various trades.

Non Approval of Addendums to Discretionary Grants. It was reported that most of the Addendum applications that were submitted had not been approved by TETA as doing so would disrupt the TETA'S NSDF Objectives.

Aerospace Apprentice Policy. This document is still under revision and a draft there-of will shortly be circulated for industry comment.

TETA Training Programme. It was reported that the TETA wants to hold a project management training session for all stakeholders who participate in Discretionary Grants. The TETA will identify a service provider and then those interested will be invited to nominate candidates to attend the session.

Human Resources. Temporary staff is to be contracted in, in order to assist with processing the backlog in Discretionary Grants and Disbursements.

ANSO MEETING WITH COMMISSIONER FOR CIVIL AVIATION: 11 February 2009

SEVERAL ISSUES of major concern to the non-scheduled aviation industry in South Africa, represented by the Association of Non-Scheduled Operators (ANSO), were on the agenda of a special meeting recently held between it, the Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa and the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) at which the authority, represented by the Commissioner and select senior management, showed a distinct willingness to both cooperate with the industry and to investigate the problems.

The issues discussed included:

- Aircraft Operating Certificates (AOC) and their revalidation process;
- Aircraft Operating Specifications;
- Safety Management System (SMS) workshop amendments,
- Flight Dispatchers and the associated manual and training;
- Hot Air Balloon operations in terms of their own Part;
- Minimum qualifications and suitability of responsible persons;
- Delays when adding aircraft to an existing AOC;
- Problems associated with Part 61;
- Some instances of poor service;
- Continued lack of response by the SACAA to correspondence;
- Apparent lack of action by the SACAA against illegal operations;
- Problems associated with some of the authority's inspectors;
- Maintenance Control Manual;
- AIC10.2 not being updated in respect to the index of AIC publications; and the
- Backlog and delay on the issuing of Certificates of Airworthiness;

In regard to the question of the Aircraft Operating Certificate requirement and its revalidation, ANSO delegates pointed out that the process was subject to a great deal of subjectivity and inconsistency. The standards applied during the process, were very much dependent upon who was allocated as "Project Manager".

One of the biggest complaints that the ANSO has, relates to Aircraft Operating Specifications. ANSO claimed that the current pro-forma for the operating specifications was designed specifically for scheduled operations. Furthermore, it was claimed that the SACAA was making changes to the operating specifications in a "haphazard way thereby creating confusion as to what the current requirements were".

The Association of Non-Scheduled Operators raised the concern that despite the fact that the requirement for Safety Management Systems (SMS) would only become effective on January 1 next year, the SMS was reflected as a compliance issue on SACAA checklists. During SACAA audits, the checklists were being marked as showing a non-compliance. ANSO stressed that the SMS criteria should be removed from the check list until the SMS requirement came into operation.

The association also pointed out that various amendments to the SMS regulation which had been agreed upon by the SACAA at the SMS Workshops had not yet been inserted into the regulations. The SACAA indicated that the agreed upon amendments were already published in the Government Gazette for comment and once approved by the CARCOM, promulgated into law.

Service Delivery. The on-going complaint about the SACAA's lack of service delivery was also raised. The continued lack in responding to enquiries and loss of documents was tackled at length. This included the poor reaction time in answering the switchboard promptly.

The Commissioner of Civil Aviation, Colin Jordaan, acknowledged that the SACAA was aware of the problem with the handling of documentation and was in the process of acquiring a new electronic document filing system which would be installed and operational before the year end.

The meeting was told that the authority was dissatisfied with the switchboard supplied to them by their service provider and that various steps had been taken to improve the speed with which the switchboard was answered. Although the authority were of the opinion that this issue had been resolved they would again check to see whether a problem still existed.

The General Manager Air Safety Operations, Mr Anton Richman, advised the meeting that if anyone experienced problems with service, they should "escalate the issue to the various levels of management as required to get a satisfactory solution".

Another aspect brought up at the meeting was that SACAA inspectors were demanding compliance with requirements which were not legislated. There were also differing interpretations of the regulations among the inspectors. The General Manager Air Safety Operations recommended that where an operator was experiencing "these kinds of difficulties", the specific issue or complaint should be referred in writing to the relevant senior manager and thereafter, if necessary, to the responsible SACAA general manager.

On the question of alleged illegal operations, ANSO reported that many non-scheduled operators complained that the SACAA failed to react upon reports of illegal operations. To this, the General Manager Air Safety Operations suggested that where non-scheduled operators wished to report incidents of alleged illegal activity, they could either refer the matter in writing to the SACAA or report the allegation directly to the Special Investigation Unit of the South African Police Service. The authority also advised that where allegations of illegal activities were made, these would have to be in writing in order for the SACAA or SAPS to take action.

The backlog on the issue of Certificates of Airworthiness was another topic brought up at the meeting. The ANSO delegates complained that it could take up to three months for the SACAA Airworthiness Department to issue or renew a CoA.

To this the General Manager of Air Safety, Mr Obert Chakarisa explained that the authority was about to release a new AIC on how the issuing of CoAs could be dealt with in future. This new procedure, he said, would improve efficiency. He also announced that the SACAA would shortly issue an AIC on changes to the Modification Approval process. He advised that in future it would only be necessary to file applications for major modifications. Minor modifications would be dealt with at the AMO level.

New Developments. The Commissioner indicated that a new SACAA review committee known as SCORR (Special Committee on Regulation Review) had been established to review certain portions of the current regulations. Areas receiving special attention are the balance and appropriateness of the regulatory standards contained in Parts 121 and 135 and the development of specific operating requirements for Corporate flight departments. The authority was still looking at specific regulations for commercial hot air ballooning so that balloon operators would no longer have to operate in terms of Part 135.

A follow-up meeting is planned for 16 March 2009 and ANSO has committed to address each item and report back to the industry in each instance.

NASCOM : 12 February 2009.

The following issues of special interest were discussed-

Protected Areas Bill. It was reported by the Department of Transport that negotiations with the DEAT over suitable wording for the section 14 amendment were continuing. CAASA requested that a meeting be convened between the DoT and Industry to discuss where this process was going.

Progress on LY NDB GNSS cloud break procedures. The SACAA advised that due to a lack of resources in the PANS OPS Department, it was estimated that they would only be able to finalise the drafting of the procedures around August 2009. CAASA expressed its disappointment at this delay.

FAJS CTR Violations. An information paper on this issue was presented by ATNS. It proposed to solve this hazard via a new route structure and better briefing training. It was decided that ATNS should further develop the proposal for referral to the Johannesburg Special Rules Area Workgroup.

WORLD CUP SAFETY AND SECURITY MEETING: 6 MARCH 2009

Possible amendments to the working group action list were discussed. CAASA raised a concern as to whether sufficient fuel would be available at the General Aviation Airports during the World Cup. If fuel supplies did become a problem, this could disrupt the ATNS Flow Control planning. The Workgroup agreed that this could be a potential problem and undertook to place this issue on their oversight programme. The Workgroup is also continue looking at ensuring that there is proper co-operation between the national disaster management structures for the World Cup.

CARCOM MEETING: 25 FEBRUARY 2009.

The following issues of special interest were before CARCOM-

General. The Secretariat advised that-

- The 35th Amendment to the CAR was promulgated on 20th February 2009 containing 10 amendments to Part 62 and 3 to Part 61.
- The Commissioner had decided not to promulgate the requirements for the licensing of Flight Dispatchers as approved by CARCOM.

Proposal to amend Part 65 CAR : For discussion. The Committee was advised that the original proposal and been work shopped by ATNS, the SACAA and GATSCA leading to substantial changes being agreed to by the parties. The Committee decided that as ATNS, the SACAA and GATSCA were the only parties having an interest in these

amendments it would serve no purpose in re-publishing the proposal and therefore the proposal should proceed to promulgation stage.

Proposals to amend Part 108 CAR and CATS : For decision. Proposals relating to amending the requirements in the regulations for known cargo and the technical standards containing requirements for regulated agents were discussed by the Committee. The Committee decided not to approve these proposals.

Proposals to amend Part 11 CAR : For scrutiny. This is a proposal to constitute a regulatory committee to advise the Commissioner on SACAA Fee related issues- the so-called FEECOM. This proposal was put forward by CAASA. The proposal was examined and discussed in detail by the Committee. The SACAA argued that the definition of “fee” contained therein was too wide and that references to “fuel levies” and “passenger safety charges” which were not mandated in terms of the Aviation Act, but payable in terms of other legislation should be deleted from the definition. CAASA agreed to make this deletion and remove other references and requirements in the proposal that related to passenger safety charges and fuel levies. On this basis, the Committee agreed that the proposal could proceed to publication for comment.

Proposals to amend Part 139 CAR and CATS: For discussion. This proposal contained various amendments relating to the standards for aerodrome rescue and fire fighting services and fire fighting training requirements. CAASA objected to the proposed amendments on the grounds that they contained a variety of terminology that was nowhere defined in the existing regulations or in the proposal itself. It was decided to withdraw the proposals and refer them to a workgroup consisting of ACSA, CAASA and the SACAA so that they could be revised appropriately.

Proposal to amend Technical Standard 121.06.3: For scrutiny. This proposal was put forward by CAASA on behalf of ANSO. It proposed that the aircraft MCM weight category delineating the requirement for flight crew proficiency checks be increased from 5700kg to 45 000kg's. The cost implication involved in sending flight crew overseas for proficiency training places South African operators of small commercial aeroplanes at a distinct disadvantage when competing for contracts against other countries that do not have similar proficiency requirements. Countries such as Canada only require crews that operate aircraft with an MCM in excess of 45 000kg to undergo this type of training. CAASA submitted that South Africa should follow the Canadian example. After discussing the proposal in depth, the Committee decided to refer the proposal to a work group.

CONSULTATION MEETING WITH ATNS RE DURBAN GENERAL FLYING AREA : 3 MARCH 2009

“On 3 March, a meeting took place between CAASA and the Aero Club, on the one hand, and the ATNS on the other, to discuss the relocation of the General Flying Area, FAD 58. ATNS advised that it has become necessary to relocate the current General Flying Area (FAD 58) due to the construction activities on the site of the new King Shaka Airport. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain input from the stakeholder bodies representing the commercial and recreational operators that utilise Virginia Municipal Aerodrome. ATNS has already consulted with the operators themselves, but has received no comment or input on the issue from this quarter. The meeting with CAASA and ATNS is a precursor to ATNS applying to NASCOM for the decommissioning of the current FAD 58 and the designation of a new General Flying Area. (ATNS will probably apply to NASCOM at its August meeting for the re-designation of the airspace).

ATNS placed a proposal on the table that the General Flying Area (the current FAD 58) be relocated to an area around Shongweni where FAD 57 is currently situated. ATNS believes that , subject to their being no environmental obstacles, the current FAD 59 could be extended in a south and westerly direction to create a larger GF Area than the current size of FAD 59. FAD 59 and FAD 57 have been and are, areas that have been used as high intensity flying areas for many years by the SA Air Force. Operators out of Virginia can route to the new GF Area via the Umgeni Valley.

ATNS believes that this relocation of the General Flying Area will not prejudice General Aviation in any way as they maintain that Shongweni is closer to Virginia in terms of “track miles” than the current FAD 58.

ATNS is however open to any other proposal from stakeholders and any input in this regard should be referred to Mr Kevin O’ Brien who is coordinating the consultations on this issue. He can be contacted at the following email address: kevino@atns.co.za.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CAASA visit to Wonderboom Airport. CAASA will revisit Wonderboom Airport on **Friday 13 March** to meet with its members and other operators at the airport to discuss matter of mutual interest and concern. This meeting will take place at **10:00** on the veranda at the Pretoria Flying School. Please come and join us for tea and biscuits.

CAASA Road Show visit to Bloemfontein. CAASA, AMOSA and HASA intend taking the roadshow to Bloemfontein on **Friday 8 May 2009**. The road show will take place at the Clubhouse at the new Tempe Airport in Bloemfontein, starting at **17:30**. All our members in the Bloemfontein area as well as those wishing to find out more about CAASA, AMOSA and HASA are invited to come and meet us for drinks and snacks.

ANSO Conference. ANSO will be holding an inaugural conference at the Indaba Hotel on 3 June 2009. The Theme of the conference will be "A place for Non-Scheduled Operators?" The keynote presentation at the conference will be given by the Commissioner for Civil Aviation, Captain Colin Jordaan. All Non-scheduled operators are requested to diarise this date. More information about the conference will be publicised in the aviation media closer to the time.

AWSA NEWS:

1. New ATNS CEO:

CAASA welcomes the new ATNS CEO, Patrick Dlamini, and wish him well in his new post.

We in general aviation look forward to continuing the constructive relations we have had with ATNS in the past,

2. 30-day extensions to make a come-back:

The 30-day extensions for IF Ratings and medicals are likely to be re-introduced following discussions with SACAA.

3. CAA tariff increases:

Once again the airlines have requested that GA make a bigger monetary contribution. The CAA intends to increase the fuel levy by 5c a litre, and the passenger safety charge will increase by about R1. Various organisations are opposing the fee increase for GA, on the basis that GA does not need the CAA FAA A1 rating (which has led to the higher fees).

4. NTCA used in training:

CAA has decided not to require the use of ballistic chutes in NTCA aircraft used in training. They will introduce new requirements for NTCA training aircraft some time in the future.

5. Great news for non-Gautengers:

CAA has announced its intention to set up satellite offices around South Africa, and is intending to open an office at Cape Town International by September 2009.

Business Aviation News:

While testifying before the House Aviation Sub-Committee recently, NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen challenged recent critics who have questioned the value of business aviation, and called for companies to divest of business aircraft. During the hearing Bolen was asked about recent negative media coverage of the industry. "It's a fact: business aviation is essential to America," he said but "unfortunately, an understanding of that reality is not

reflected in calls for companies to divest of their business airplanes. It is dangerous because it is costing jobs, and it is dangerous because it is threatening an entire manufacturing base. It's dangerous because it is taking away a tool many companies absolutely rely on to remain competitive and survive, especially in this unforgiving marketplace." He further argued that business aviation is the most prudent and cost effective means of transportation for many businesses and should be promoted, not disparaged.

NBAA reiterates commitment to support aviation system modernisation:

While in Congress, Ed Bolen told members that the business aviation community remains committed to continued progress towards a Next Generation Air Traffic Control (NextGen) system, and supported a multi-year reauthorisation" (funding) package for the FAA. He said that GA were early adopters of GPS navigation systems and supporters of Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B), which is now the cornerstone of the modernisation effort.

Registration now available for new NBAA Webinar Series on the "Business Case for Business Aviation"

This series is now available online and is designed to help flight department managers and others overseeing flight departments communicate the value of their operations. The first webinar, which will be held on 27 February from 2:00 to 3:30 ET will evaluate performance metrics that flight departments can implement to document the value their business aircraft provide to the company. Subsequent webinars will be held on 6 and 13 March. and will address public relations issues and best practices of aircraft ownership.

For more info go to <http://nbaa.impactlearning.org>

SAA's CEO:

Most of you will have been following the trials and tribulations of SAA concerning their CEO and the decision of the SAA Board to place Khaya Ngqula on special leave while they conduct an investigation into "serious allegations" against him and his executive team following the airline's choice of French company Servair as its catering company.

Mr Chris Smyth, GM of Operations, has been appointed as acting CEO.

To add to the Airline's worries is the arrest of a second crew for drug smuggling at Heathrow, and now a strike by certain Union groups, who demand a retention bonus of the order of R15 000!! Still, their holidaying CEO is said to get a retention bonus of some R65 000 pm, which sets something of a precedent!

More passenger tax woes:

At a time when airlines are reducing the number of flights due to declining passenger loads, some R600m a year in taxes are to be added to the cost of airline tickets with effect from April.

ACSA has announced a hike of 18.5% in passenger services tax to pay for the construction work at the state-owned airports in readiness for the crowds expected for the World Cup next year. At present the passenger services tax is R41 for domestic, R85 for regional and R112 for international flights. The new tax will be R49, R102 and R135 respectively, all inclusive of VAT.

Last year the Treasury received the departure tax paid by passengers leaving SA which totalled R541 for the year. Included in passenger fares was a safety charge of R10 and a fuel levy of 2c a litre.

One wonders whether this cow that is so easily being milked will ever run dry, and these taxes be cancelled in future

Now that Opec is expecting a sharp drop in oil demand, and the price is still falling, perhaps we might find that the fuel levy will become unnecessary! Some airlines have already slashed fuel surcharges in the hope of boosting air travel during this period of economic slowdown, one being Mango, who enjoyed an average load factor of 95% over the festive season, and which intends to cut air fares by up to 14%.

Stellenbosch Flying Club's new flight training centre:

The largest Flight Training Centre in the Western Cape was officially inaugurated near the end of January, at the airfield known among its members as the "most beautiful airfield in the world".

The success of the new centre was marked with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and the award of wings to twenty new pilots. The new centre was constructed from a residential building on the site, and boasts three lecture rooms and small conference facilities, which can be hired out – a vast improvement on the old prefab construction next to the clubhouse.

A few facts of interest are:

- With 700 members and 270 aircraft hangared there, it is one of the largest in South Africa'
- It provides landing space for businessmen and high profile visitors
- It provides a home for recreational and aspirant aviators, and promotes aviation in general and plays an important part in pilot training.

Callous travel agents:

The holiday plans of a British therapist went very awry when her travel agent, Thomas Cook, put the wrong codes on her tickets and she ended up in Puerto Rico instead of Costa Rica. She only discovered that she was on the wrong island when trying to get a taxi to take her to her hotel destination, and she was left to find her own way to Costa Rica, involving her in a great deal of extra expense and the loss of a couple of days' leave because of a distressing nightmare.

Staff at Thomas Cook had entered SJU instead of SJO on her tickets but were not very sympathetic on hearing of her predicament.

NEWS IN BRIEF:

1. A group of British Islamists in a London court explained how they planned to blow up seven transatlantic flights, and cause death on an almost unprecedented scale, targeting Boeings 777s, 767s or 763s of American Airlines, United Airlines and Air Canada, to Chicago, New York, Washington, Montreal, Toronto and San Francisco., by using liquid explosives hidden in soft drink bottles. They intended to smuggle on board components for their improvised bombs hidden in soft-drink bottles and batteries, and involving other innocuous items.
2. An official of the FAA said that the plane that crashed into a house near Buffalo, New York, recently was on autopilot, a possible violation of airline policy in icy conditions which calls for pilots to fly the plane manually. 50 people died in the crash. An alternate opinion is that the crew overreacted, and the plane stalled when they tried to protect it from flying too slowly.
3. The 18 people aboard a Super Puma helicopter, when it crashed into the North Sea off Scotland last week, were very lucky that it was fitted with inflatable bags which deploy when it lands on water. They were all rescued from the icy waters 190kms east of the Scottish city of Aberdeen, having been en route to an oil rig.
4. Nobody likes a drunken pilot, especially when the aircraft hasn't yet taken off! Luckily for the passengers of an Aeroflot flight 315, who reported the problem with their cell phones, the pickled pilot was ejected before he could cause any real damage!
5. Researchers from Leiden University Medical Centre recently reported their findings that passengers sitting in window seats have a two-fold increase in the risk of developing DVT as against those in other seats. This was possibly explained because such passengers were more cramped than those in aisle seats.