



*International Civil Aviation Organization*

**Third Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group  
(APAC – AIG/3)**

*(Colombo, Sri Lanka, 23 - 24 June 2015)*

**Agenda Item 4: Independent investigation authority**

**THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION COMMISSION –  
DEVELOPING A NEW INDEPENDENT AVIATION SAFETY  
INVESTIGATION AGENCY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC**

(Presented by Papua New Guinea)

**SUMMARY**

This paper highlights the Papua New Guinea experience and challenges in establishing a new independent investigation agency, and also shares the vision and plans for the agency.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The PNG aviation environment is a challenging one, well-known for its difficult terrain and treacherous weather, but we have a proud aviation history – for example our national carrier, Air Niugini, has a record of over 40 years' service without a fatal accident. An independent Air Safety Investigation agency (AIC) is critical to maintaining and enhancing aviation transport safety in PNG through understanding the factors underlying accidents and serious incidents and recommending changes that reduce systemic risks.

1.2 The AIC's primary function is to improve aviation safety by investigating accidents and serious incidents, determining the factors that affect, or may affect, transport safety, and communicating its findings. Investigations in Papua New Guinea (PNG) that focus on future safety, rather than blame, will increase stakeholder awareness of, and action on, safety issues and foster industry and public confidence in the transport system. Publishing reports which explain how and why accidents and serious incidents occurred increases safety awareness and knowledge, and forms the basis for stakeholders to improve safety action.

1.3 The AIC conducts its investigations on a 'no-blame' basis, does not apportion blame or liability, and does not seek to determine any liability of persons or organisations in transport matters.

**2. DISCUSSION**

2.1 In Papua New Guinea prior to 2010, the aviation accident/serious incident investigation function was performed by a unit in the Department of Transport and, before that, by the then-Department of Civil Aviation (now the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of PNG). The AIC was established as a legal entity on the appointment of its first Chief Executive Officer (Capt Inau) in August 2010.

2.2 The agency is responsible to the Minister for Civil Aviation and operates under the Civil Aviation Act 2000 (Amended) Part XIII, Commission of Inquiry Act 1951, Civil Aviation Rules 2004, ICAO Annex 13 and the relevant PNG public service Acts. The AIC cooperates with other Government of Papua New Guinea agencies that have powers relating to transport safety, in particular the Department of Transport, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA PNG), PNG Airservices Ltd (PNG ASL), the National Airports Corporation (NAC), and the Maritime Safety Authority (MSA). The AIC works with the transport safety investigators of other countries under the provisions of Annex 13.

2.3 In accordance with ICAO provisions to promote cooperation between Contracting States in all matters relating to civil aviation, the AIC has a strong agency-to-agency relationship with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB). The ATSB is currently assisting PNG to develop the AIC's capacity with Australian Aid funding through Component 2 of the Transport Sector Support Program. This continues a long history of PNG/Australia cooperation in aviation safety, illustrated by the AIC/ATSB collaboration in the investigation of the DHC-6 accident at Kokoda (P2-MCB) in August 2009 (13 fatalities), and the DHC-8 accident near Madang (P2 MCJ) in October 2011 (28 fatalities). Both investigations had a substantial impact on safety, and recommended changes to the use of flight data recorders, terrain awareness, warning system and airborne collision avoidance systems, ground proximity warning systems, cockpit voice recorders, and the DHC-8 propeller control system worldwide.

2.4 It is the Government of PNG's aspiration that the AIC will in future develop into a multi-modal investigation agency.

### **Personnel**

2.5 The AIC Commission consists of three Commissioners: a former National Court judge, a former Air Niugini jet pilot, and a third position which is currently vacant. We have 20 full time employees including the CEO. As a committed equal-opportunity employer, five of our staff are women and we are actively seeking to employ female trainee investigators.

2.6 Of five full-time investigators, three have a background in the aviation industry (flying operations, engineering, and air traffic control) and two are trainees. Our three experienced investigators have been trained to conduct investigations and write reports in accordance with the standards and recommended procedures of Annex 13. In addition to its own staff, the AIC may draw on industry expertise, both national and international, by appointing 'Expert Assessors' to investigations if necessary and as provided for by Section 242 of the Civil Aviation Act.

### **Headquarters**

2.7 We are operating from new offices in Boroko in Port Moresby which have recently been upgraded to include the following:

- Training Room fitted out for 10 or more students, each with a desk-top computer.
- Board Room.
- Ample space for our investigators and other staff.
- Investigator equipment store stocked according to our Policy and Procedures Manual and ICAO requirements.
- Investigation archive with accident investigation files dating from the late 1960s.
- Space for a laboratory and storage of aircraft parts.

## **Current challenges**

2.8 There are six principal challenges facing our organisation at the moment, as follows.

- Getting the right people as trainee investigators, and keeping them.
- Developing our investigators technically.
- Developing our support staff.
- Fine-tuning our organisational structure and supporting organisational processes.
- Strengthening governance and the oversight role of the Commissioners.
- Communicating our resourcing needs to the PNG Government so we have (a) the resources to carry out our function, in particular an investigator pay-scale that reflects the technical qualifications and expertise of people who are also in demand from the PNG aviation industry, so we can attract and retain good people, and (b) increased operating funds to conduct investigations.

## **The next 5 years**

2.9 A 5-year 'Agency Support Arrangement' was signed in December 2014 with our Australian Aid funding partners, and going forward we are pursuing the following to build the AIC's capacity.

- Selection and hiring of up to ten male and female trainee investigators.
- Development of the AIC's own 12 to 24 month investigator training program in collaboration with the ATSB, building on proven ATSB training materials.
- Making a joint submission with other national aviation agency CEOs to the National Executive Council (cabinet) to improve resourcing to aviation sector agencies.
- A Corporate Plan and supporting strategic plans to define activities, milestones, and timelines to achieve our objectives.
- Improving corporate governance through an annual joint AIC-ATSB meeting of Commissioners and CEOs.
- Appointing an Investigations Manager to strengthen AIC's capabilities and increase the rate at which investigations are conducted in PNG.
- Training for support staff to improve corporate functions.
- Legislative amendments in the form of a stand-alone 'AIC Act'.
- Raising public awareness of the AIC and its role by announcing the release of reports on television and in the daily press.

**3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

- 3.1 The meeting is invited to note the information in this paper.

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