



MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT & CIVIL AVIATION

MEDIA BRIEF

11 August 2024

The Minister for Transport and Civil Aviation endorses AIC Investigation into Mercury Spillage incident.

The Minister for Transport and Civil Aviation, Hon. Walter Schnaubelt, today acknowledged the AIC's announcement of the commencement of an investigation by the PNG Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) into the serious incident involving the spillage of hazardous material, mercury, in the cargo compartment of an Air Niugini Boeing 737-800 aircraft at Jacksons International Airport, Port Moresby, on 23 July 2024.

The Minister emphasized the significance of the AIC's independent investigation in identifying safety and security deficiencies in PNG's aviation industry. "The AIC's independent investigation is essential to uncovering the facts surrounding this incident and identifying the contributing factors with the aim of improving safety. I fully respect and endorse the AIC's work and urge all parties involved, including NAC, Air Niugini, CASA PNG and all other parties, to fully cooperate with the investigation. This incident underscores the need for rigorous safety and security measures in our aviation system."



The Minister noted the potential risks that this incident posed to passengers, crew, and ground baggage handling staff. "The inability of existing airport systems to detect dangerous materials such as mercury on an aircraft, which are concealed and end up on an aircraft could have had catastrophic consequences. It is imperative that we understand how this breach occurred and take all necessary steps to prevent a recurrence."

The AIC, led by Chief Commissioner Maryanne J. Wal, has commenced its investigation in accordance with ICAO Annex 13 provisions and the AIC's mandate under the Civil Aviation Act 2000 (As Amended). The AIC has already begun gathering information to assess the occurrence and has highlighted the serious risks posed by the spillage, including potential damage to the aircraft and the risk of mercury poisoning.

"The Government is committed to ensuring the highest standards of safety and security in our aviation sector. I am confident that the AIC's investigation will provide critical insights and lead to necessary improvements in our safety and security protocols," the Minister added.

The Minister concluded by reiterating the Government's full support for the AIC's efforts and called on all stakeholders to facilitate the investigation. "This is a matter of national safety and security, and we must all work together to ensure this does not happen again."

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Hon. Walter D. Schnaubelt, MP
Minister for Transport & Civil Aviation