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Safety recommendation: AIC 24-R16/24-2002

Addressed to: Air Niugini Limited

Date issued: 29 November 2024

Investigation link: AIC 24-2002

Action status: Issued

Introduction

On 8 August 2024, at 12:04 local time (00:04 UTC), the AIC was notified by CASA PNG of a serious incident that occurred on 23 July 2024, involving a B737-800 aircraft, registered P2-PXB operated by Air Niugini Limited during a Regular Public Transport (RPT) flight from Jacksons International Airport, Port Moresby, to Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. The AIC immediately commenced an investigation on 8 August 2024.

Occurrence

On 23 July 2024, at about 09:00 local time (23:00 UTC¹), a B737-800 aircraft, registered P2-PXB (PXB), owned by Loftleidir Icelandic and operated by Air Niugini Limited (ANL) was conducting a RPT flight from Jackson International Airport (Jacksons Airport), Port Moresby to Nadzab Tomodachi International Airport (Nadzab Airport), Morobe Province, had a spillage of hazardous material, mercury in its cargo compartment, during passenger boarding and loading of cargo.

There were sixty-eight persons on board the aircraft: 2 pilots, 4 cabin crew and 61 passengers. There were no injuries reported passengers, crew and ground personnel.

The aircraft aft cargo compartment (Cargo Hold No. 3) floor from the doorway of the aircraft was contaminated with mercury.

¹ The 24-hour clock, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), is used in this report to describe the local time as specific events occurred. Local time in the area of the serious incident, Papua New Guinea Time (Pacific/Port Moresby) is UTC + 10 hours.

Safety deficiency description

Air Niugini Air Operator Security Programme (AOSP), Version 20, section 3.18.5.1 states that to comply with regulatory requirements in the National Civil Aviation Security Training Program (CNCASTP) and the subsection of *PNG Civil Aviation Rule (CAR) Part 108*, all Personnel employed by Air Niugini who are involved with or responsible for implementing security measures and those authorised to access airside areas shall undergo initial and recurrent training that consists of theoretical and practical training.

Personnel implementing or responsible for security controls are to complete an initial training in which they are appropriately selected and sufficiently trained and deemed competent to perform their duties. A recurrent training shall take place within two (2) years to ensure knowledge is current with operational requirements and up to date training records maintained.

X-Ray screeners Cargo Officer prevent the carriage of unauthorized items and or goods that present a direct security threat on all Air Niugini aircrafts. The officer must have completed a certified security training course and aviation related training.

A Screening Officer must have prior exposure to security critical areas and be appropriately trained to a level of security Awareness sufficient to understand the importance of maintaining standards of security control measures.

Section 3.18.12 Training Matrix in the operator's *AOSP, version 20* states that the X-Ray Screeners Cargo Officer is required to complete the following courses:

- Basic Security Officer Training
- Cargo X-Ray Screening Course
- Cargo Security Training
- Emergency Response
- Dangerous Goods Awareness (Initial/Recurrent)
- Aviation Security (Initial/Recurrent)

AOSP, Version 20, section 3.9.11 (2) states that Air Niugini Limited (ANL) will be responsible for security screening of cargo, courier and express mail and the mail accepted from unknown Shippers and will also ensure that this is not in any way inferior to the standards set by the appropriate Authority.

(3) Air Niugini Screeners shall perform the screening and be trained in accordance with standards contained in this Manual [AOSP, Ver 20]

AOSP, Version 20, section 3.9.11.17 'Authorisation for Screening Operatives' also states that only screeners that have completed the appropriate training stipulated in section 3.9.11 and have received authorisation as per section 3.3.11.12 (*Refer to Section 1.5.2.2*) shall screen cargo, courier, express mail and mail.

The Cargo Screener's training records showed that she had completed the following trainings:

- Dangerous Goods Awareness (DGA) Course on 21 June 2022 (Expiry date: 30 June 2024)
- General Induction Awareness on 08 September 2022
- Safety Management System – Recurrent Training on 6 March 2023
- X-Ray Screeners Training on 23 March 2023 (Expiry date: 23 March 2025)
- Ground AVSEC Awareness on 14 July 2024

The training records for the Aviation Security (AVSEC) Cargo Screener indicates that she completed an Initial X-ray Screening Course on May 29, 2015, followed by a refresher course from June 29 to 30, 2017, during which she successfully completed an X-ray Refresher Screening Observation. The records show that her most recent refresher course was completed on March 23, 2023, with an expiration date of March 28, 2024. However, there is no documentation to confirm that an X-ray Refresher Screening Observation took place during this latest refresher course.

The training records also showed that the Cargo Screening Officer's Dangerous Goods Awareness (DGA) certificate had expired on 30 June 2024.

The Officer's training records showed that he had completed a Ground Aviation Security Awareness Training, X-Ray Screeners Training (Recurrent) and was current. However, at the time of the occurrence, the following courses had already expired:

- Dangerous Goods Awareness -30 June 2024

The investigation also found that the X-ray Screening Course was attended by the officer on 28 March 2023. However, according to the operator's Air Operator Security Program, Version 20, the X-Ray Cargo screening course is required to be delivered in three (3) days.

Recommendation number AIC 24-R16/24-2002 to Air Niugini Limited

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission recommends that Air Niugini Limited should ensure all its X-ray Cargo Screening Officers are appropriately qualified and adequately trained to effectively perform their duties, in accordance with the requirements its Air Operators Security Program.

Action requested

The AIC requests that Air Niugini Limited note recommendation *AIC 24-R16/24-2002* and provide a response to the AIC within 90 days of the issue date, nor later than 27 February 2025 and explain (including evidence) how Air Niugini Limited has addressed the safety deficiency identified in the safety recommendation.



Maryanne J Wal
Chief Commissioner

Air Niugini Limited response to Safety Recommendation AIC 24-R16/24-2002

On 10 January 2025, the operator provided a response to *Safety Recommendation AIC 24-R16/24-2002*, via email stating that they were currently addressing the actions and shall revert before the due date.

The AIC did not receive a response from ANL relating to an update on their corrective actions to address the deficiencies identified in the safety recommendation, by the due date (27 February 2025).

On 14 March 2025, a courtesy follow-up email was sent to the operator by the AIC. The operator responded on the same day stating that:

1. Five of their staff had completed the 'Train the Trainer' training in relation to 'Safety Passage X-ray Image Interpretation Trainers' conducted by CJ Consulting Group of Singapore.
2. Air Niugini Limited had accomplished the Safe Passage Computer Base Training (CBT) X-ray Screener Training and Certification System. The training syllabus was currently with Civil Aviation Safety Authority of PNG (CASA PNG), for review and acceptance before they can commence training for their X-ray Cargo Screening Officers.

Attached to the email were copies of:

1. 'X-ray Screeners Training' certificates for the X-ray Cargo Screening Officers,
2. Certificates of the five training staff who completed the 'Safe Passage X-Ray Image Interpretation Certification for Trainers' training, and
3. The syllabus for 'Computer Based Training System for X-Ray Screeners' training which was submitted to CASA PNG for acceptance.

On 25 March 2025, the operator provided the 'X-ray Screeners Training' certificates for the remaining two X-ray Cargo Screening Officers, following a request made by AIC.

On 7 May 2025, the AIC made another courtesy follow on the status of CASA PNG's acceptance of their 'Computer Based Training System for X-Ray Screeners' training syllabus. The operator responded on the same day stating that they are currently awaiting the availability of CASA PNG personnel to assess/examine the training program, for approval.

AIC assessment of Air Niugini Limited response

The AIC reviewed Air Niugini Limited's response to *Safety Recommendation AIC 24-R16/24-2002* and notes that the completion of the 'Safe Passage Computer Based Training' by all X-ray Screeners, will address the deficiency identified in *Safety Recommendation AIC 24-R16/24-2002*.

The AIC also notes that ANL will commence training upon approval of their training program by CASA PNG, which is subject to the availability of CASA PNG personnel.

The AIC has assigned the response a *satisfactory intent* rating.

The AIC recorded the status of the Safety Recommendation: **MONITOR**



Maryanne J Wal

Chief Commissioner

28 May 2025