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Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS & DEFENCE

ANNUAL REPORT

Civil Aviation Authority 2023 Annual Report

ENTITY: Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF)

VENUE: CAAF Conference Room, Nadi

DATE: Tuesday, 8th April, 2025

VERBATIM REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE HELD AT THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF FIJI'S CONFERENCE ROOM, NADI, ON 8TH APRIL, 2025 AT 3.00 P.M.

Submittee: Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji

In Attendance:

1. Mr. Rigamoto Aisake - Executive Manager Aviation Security & Facilitation
2. Ms. Sereima Bolanavatu - Executive Manager Standards & Compliance
3. Mr. Isikeli Tomi Waqa - Executive Manager Air Safety
4. Ms. Alisi Namoro - Executive Manager Ground Safety
5. Mr. Niroshana Perera - Executive Manager Corporate Services
6. Ms. Florence Takinana - Manager Legal & Enforcement / Board Secretary

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, the CEO, staff, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone, especially the CAAF staff, who are here to provide their submission to the Committee.

At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to the Standing Orders of Parliament, specifically Standing Order 111(2), all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, this meeting is open to the public and the media.

However, for any sensitive information concerning this submission that cannot be disclosed in public, that can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing. Do note that that will only be allowed in a few circumstances, which include matters of:

1. national security;
2. third-party confidential information;
3. personnel or human resource matters; and
4. Committee deliberation and development of Committee's recommendation and report.

I wish to remind honourable Members and our submittees that all comments and questions are to be addressed through the Chair. Please, note that if there are any questions from the Members of the Committee, they may interject or we will wait until the end of your submission to ask our questions. This is a Parliamentary meeting, and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and

the Standing Orders of Parliament. Please, bear in mind that we do not condone slander or libel of any sort, and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts.

I would like to introduce the Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

(Introduction of Committee Members)

Today the Committee will be having an oral submission from the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) in relation to their 2023 Annual Report. I would like to take this time to invite our guests to introduce themselves before they proceed with their submission.

MR. R. AISAKE.- The Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, ladies and gentlemen; on behalf of the Chief Executive of CAAF, Ms. Theresa Levestam, I welcome you to the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji this afternoon.

Thank you for agreeing to CAAF's request to provide our submission today. On behalf of the Chief Executive, Ms. Levestam extends her apology to the Committee. She has a medical emergency in the family to attend to and is unable to be with us this afternoon.

However, the Executive Committee of CAAF will be presenting our submission on the 2023 Annual Report and we welcome this opportunity to discuss and table this report. My name is Rigamoto Aisake, the Executive Manager of Aviation Security and Facilitation with CAAF. I will request my colleagues to briefly introduce themselves and then we will commence.

Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, very briefly, our presentation is split into two parts. The first part will be presented by the Executive Manager, Standards and Compliance, Ms. Sereima Bolanavatu. I will provide the second part of the presentation, and then we will have the questions from the Committee in regard to the CAAF Report.

We have tentatively put together a schedule for the visitation and with your approval, Deputy Chairperson, upon completion of the presentation and fielding questions, we intend to visit the facility, then we will come back for a short refreshment before you conclude your visit. May I ask my colleagues to briefly introduce themselves, after which Ms. Bolanavatu will present the first part of our submission.

(Introduction of CAAF Officials)

MS. S. BOLANAVATU.- Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, it is truly an honour to address you all today and present to you CAAF's journey that is reflected in the 2023 Annual Report, on our achievements, challenges, successes and our vision for the road ahead. The contents of the presentation covers the following, the:

1. General Overview;
2. Trends and Analysis on Achievements;
3. Sustainable Development Goals; 4. Challenges; and 5. Future Outlook.

As part of the general overview, I hope to provide some background information on where CAAF exists and CAAF's mandate. I will also briefly share the State Safety and Security Oversight System, CAAF's Strategic Framework and CAAF's Organisation Structure.

On the existence of CAAF, let me just take you back to history. If you look at the slide, you will see some pictures of World War II. World War II was a powerful catalyst for the technical development of aeroplane, where a vast network of passenger and freight carriage was set up during that period. There were many obstacles, both political and technical, to evolving these facilities and routes to the new civilian purposes. That resulted in the United States (US) holding several consultations with major allies.

The US Government then extended an invitation to 55 States to attend an International Civil Aviation Conference in Chicago in 1944, in which 54 member-States attended and in the end, 52 States signed the Convention on International Civil Aviation, also known as the Chicago Convention. Fiji ratified the Convention in May 1973 and to-date, 193 member-States have ratified the Convention.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is funded and directed by those 193 national governments to support diplomacy and cooperation in air transport. There are seven ICAO regional offices. For our region, the Asia-Pacific regional office is based in Bangkok, Thailand.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation is a specialised agency of the United Nations and is not a global regulator. That means that ICAO standards and recommended practices that are stipulated in its annexes never supersede the primacy of national regulation requirements. It is always the local national regulations that are enforced by sovereign States which must be legally adhered to by air operators who are making use of applicable airspace and airports.

As Secretary to the Chicago Convention, Fiji is obligated to fulfil its responsibilities. The Civil Aviation Act 1976 put to effect the Chicago Convention and the annexes to the Convention. In 1979, CAAF was established through the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act, to discharge the State's responsibilities and services as the guardian of aviation safety and security for the State.

On CAAF's mandate, I will briefly cover the primary aviation legislations that govern civil aviation operations in Fiji, which is the Civil Aviation Act 1976. That gives the honourable Minister the power to give effect to the International Civil Aviation Convention. The Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979 establishes CAAF, the organisation, and the Board.

The CAAF Board is appointed by the honourable Minister responsible for public enterprises and consists of not more than nine members, who appoints the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive appoints the officers and the employees of the Authority.

The functions of CAAF are stipulated in section 14 of the Civil Aviation Act 1976, Civil Aviation Act 1979 and the Civil Aviation Reform Act 1999. Fiji's obligations as a member-state of ICAO is discharged through CAAF and is responsible for regulating the safety and security of civil aviation operations in Fiji.

On funding and resources, those are stipulated in the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979 and include properties, investments, mortgages, any money earned from those, and fees and charges that are levied by CAAF. These are stipulated in the fees and charges regulations and other sums borrowed by CAAF. In addition, every departing passenger who flies out of Fiji has to pay departure tax, and \$5 of that departure tax is paid to CAAF.

In reference to the 2023 Annual Report, CAAF relied solely on three sources of funding. In 2023, CAAF received a Government grant of 10 percent of its total income, which amounts to \$668,000. The second source of funding received in 2023 was a sum of \$3.7 million, which is 56 percent of the total income of 2023. Fees and charges that CAAF received was \$1.8 million, which amounts to 34 percent of the total income for 2023.

The next slide explains ICAO's State Safety Oversight and ICAO's Safety and Security Oversight System. There are eight Critical Elements that make up the State Safety and Security Oversight.

- Critical Element 1: Primary aviation legislation.

- Critical Element 2: Specific operating regulations or security programmes for security oversight.
- Critical Element 3: State system and functions or the appropriate authority for security oversight.
- Critical Element 4: Qualified technical personnel.
- Critical Element 5: Technical guidance, tools and provision of safety and security critical information.
- Critical Element 6: Licencing, certification, authorisation and approval obligations.
- Critical Element 7: Surveillance obligations and quality control.
- Critical Element 8: Resolution of safety and security issues.

The purpose of ICAO's State Safety Oversight System is to ensure that States effectively implement safety regulations and oversight responsibilities in accordance with ICAO's standards and recommended practices. I am pleased to share with you CAAF's strategic framework, which serves as a foundation for our strategic direction. Our purpose is to safeguard the wellbeing and prosperity of regions by ensuring the utmost safety and security of air transportation. Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, CAAF's vision is to be a leader in aviation safety and security oversight in the Pacific, recognised for excellence in regulation, partnership and service delivery. Our mission is to partner with stakeholders to ensure the highest standards of safety, security and efficiency in civil aviation, fostering sustainable development and connectivity for Fiji and her people.

Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, CAAF is guided by core values that drive operations. These include professionalism, integrity, fairness, partnership and innovation.

We are committed to advancing safety, security, regulatory, excellence and sustainable aviation development for the benefit of Fiji and its people. As reflected in our motto - Safe Skies, Secure Fiji, we strive to uphold the highest standards in aviation oversight and service.

On CAAF's structure, we have the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Board, the Chief Executive, and that is a functional CAAF structure. We have different Departments and Units that report to the Chief Executive, as follows, the:

1. Air Safety Department;
2. Aviation Security Facilitation Department;
3. Quality Assurance Unit;
4. Corporate Services Department;
5. Personnel Licencing Office;
6. Ground Safety Department;

7. Legal Unit; and
8. Standards and Compliance Department.

On Human Resource issues, there is a total of 75 positions in CAAF. As of December 2024, there were five vacant positions, 13 appointments were made, and the staff turnover was 1.41 percent. Male-to-female ratio for the Authority is 64 percent male to 36 percent female, out of which 50 percent females are holding executive positions and 33 percent females are holding senior management roles.

On trends and analysis on the Chief Executive, I will take you through on how success is measured for the Authority. The first means of measuring success is using ICAO's Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme. I had covered the State Safety Oversight System on the eight Critical Elements. ICAO is part of these audit programmes. It checks on the effective implementation of those eight Critical Elements and whether there is any absence or presence of significant safety concerns.

In 2019, there was an ICAO audit and currently, Fiji's effective implementation score stands at 76.25 percent. That is way above the global average of 70 percent, and we are proud to say that we are also above the Asia-Pacific regional average of 66.6 percent. We are also very pleased to share with you that no significant safety concern was raised in 2019. In 2023, Fiji as a State, received the ICAO Council President's Certificate for the increase in effective implementation scores by more than 15 percent. That is just a graph to show the different scores on how the 76.25 percent was obtained for the different audit areas (first chart referring to the slide presentation).

The second chart is on the effective implementation for audit area, comparison of what the scores were before in 2006 as to what it is currently now. The third chart shows that Fiji as a State is ranked 11th out of the 37 States in the Asia-Pacific region. We are way above the average regional score.

The second measure of success is on the effective implementation of security oversight. In 2023, Fiji successfully completed the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP). There were nil significant security concerns raised. Fiji achieved a healthy security rating, and we have had the privilege of hosting ICAO auditor training where three participants from Fiji successfully completed this auditor training course with ICAO.

On the final measure of success, I am pleased to share with you on how Fiji as a State has been performing in terms of safety. Since 2020, we have maintained a zero fatal accident. However, in 2024, we have had two accidents involving two aircrafts - DQFIC and DQVAN, where nil casualties were observed.

I will now hand over the presentation to my colleague to continue with the second part.

MR. R. AISAKE.- Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, I will brief you on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the SDGs applicable to CAAF and how CAAF is contributing to that.

Aviation activities under ICAO aligns with and supports the UN SDGs through ICAO-CAAF initiatives, regulations, standards to promote safety, security and sustainable aviation, complementing many of the SDGs. They are the foundation and catalyst for the realisation of many of these goals.

The ICAO objectives are strongly linked to 15 of the 17 SDGs, which cascade into CAAF's objectives and activities. It influences, to a certain extent, the prerequisite conditions for achieving the SDGs or reducing negative impact. We are committed to working in close cooperation with stakeholders to support the SDG targets and contribute to make the world a better place for all.

The next slide shows the 17 SDGs and how CAAF is an enabler in this. CAAF functions as an enabler in meeting the first four SDGs - No Poverty, No Hunger, Good Health and Wellbeing, and Quality Education.

Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, through safe and efficient aviation oversight, CAAF supports economic growth by enabling trade, tourism and investment, contributing to poverty reduction in Fiji.

In terms of good health and wellbeing, CAAF ensures safe and efficient medical transport and is advancing remote piloted aircraft systems, standards for remote deliveries, while supporting the pandemic preparedness through the development of Fiji's National Aviation Plan and safeguarding public health at the border.

On quality education, we support quality education and skills development by enabling access to learning through safe air transport, regulating aviation training institutes, facilitating specialised courses, and hosting workplace attachments that build technical and vocational capacity for decent work and employment.

Similarly, in terms of gender equality, CAAF promotes gender equality through inclusive recruitment, policy reforms and awareness initiatives, which empower women in aviation and achieving gender parity.

On clean water and sanitation, through our oversight of aviation infrastructure, we support access to clean water and sanitation at aerodromes and related facilities, aligning with national efforts to improve public health and environmental standards.

On decent work and economic growth, we enable safe and efficient air transport and regulating aviation training and services. CAAF drives industry growth, supports tourism and trade, and contributes to the creation of quality jobs across Fiji. CAAF plays an influential role in terms of enabling the realisation of these UN SDGs.

On industry innovation and infrastructure, CAAF fosters innovation and resilient infrastructure by enabling remote-piloted aircraft systems and drone technology, enhancing aviation security systems, and adopting cloud-based operations to improve oversight and efficiency.

To reduce inequality, we enable safe connectivity to remote and underserved areas through certified aerodromes, heliports and water landing sites. CAAF helps reduce inequalities in access to essential services and opportunities. Not only do we have aerodromes like we have in Nausori and Nadi, we also have water landing sites that facilitate areas which cannot have a full aerodrome.

On sustainable cities and communities, we contribute to urban mobility and resilience by ensuring efficient air transport systems and certifying aviation infrastructure and making input to rural development in the region that supports emergency response.

We support climate action by enabling sustainable aviation fuels and promoting performancebased navigation, contributing to Fiji's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aviation.

Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, CAAF supports national efforts to protect marine ecosystems by regulating seaplane operations and promoting environment oversight via coastal aerodromes, contributing to the preservation of life below water.

On peace, justice and strong institutions, CAAF strengthens institutional governance and the rule of law through the ongoing review of Fiji's seven Civil Aviation Acts and its collaboration with national and international partners to establish the Advanced Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record Framework, enhancing aviation security and national resilience.

On partnerships for the goals, CAAF advances sustainable development through strong partnerships with ICAO and regional stakeholders, actively contributing to global aviation standards and collaborative initiatives. We also participate in the various ICAO working groups and implement taskforce groups to progress that. Through those contributions, CAAF is able to work towards advancing the SDGs, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring that aviation serves as a catalyst for economic and social progress.

Deputy Chairperson and honourable Members, CAAF acts as an enabler to most of the 17 SDGs that we have talked about.

What are the challenges? Like any organisation, there are always challenges. Everything is not smooth. At CAAF, we always have challenges, and they are highlighted below:

1. Effective implementation and the ability to address legislation

One of the areas in aviation we are working on to address is the legislation. We have a legislation dating back to 1976. One of the things ensuring is that the legislation we have is fit for purpose.

Many of the new requirements and standards by ICAO require a different approach, for which we do not have the legislation. I will give you an example. In 1987, we had an attempted hijacking at Nadi Airport. We did not have any legislation to prosecute. Thereby, the person who had attempted to hijack the Air New Zealand flight was not charged.

ICAO, which sets standards for aviation, requires that States take responsibility for things that happen within their domain and have legislation to address them - either the State addresses it directly, or member-States who have passengers on board the aircraft to take action against the State.

2. Specific operating regulations

An area tied to Critical Element 1 which we are working closely with our Legal Department, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation and the Office of the Solicitor General is to strengthen our legislation. That has been a work in progress for the last couple of years before 2023, but more profound in 2023.

3. Organisation, appropriate authority, and having an accident investigation group to investigate aircraft accidents that occur in Fiji. My colleague had

shown you the graph earlier of the accident record from 2020 to 2023, which was nil, zero fatality.

4. Aviation Treaties

There are three Treaties that the State needs to address in terms of enhancing aviation security legislation. The first one is the Beijing Convention of 2010, which requires and consolidates the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts on Board Aircraft. Fiji has yet to ratify the Treaty. Until and unless we ratify the Treaty, we are not able to translate the provisions of the Treaty into national law.

The Government is in the process of ratifying these three Treaties, and these are all security Treaties, the:

- (a) Beijing Convention of 2010;
- (b) Montreal Protocol of 2014 and Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft. For example, the use of aircraft aviation security officers in flight to ensure they actually protect a flight.
- (c) 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft.

Those are the three aviation Treaties for which we will need to ratify. Those are the challenges we face.

5. Establishment of national committees:

- (i) National Aviation Security Committee; (ii) National Facilitation Committee; and (iii) National Wildlife Committee.

Those three Committees are critical.

Fiji had established the National Aviation Security Committee from 2004 to 2009, after which the Committee did not meet or convene. The National Aviation Committee comprises of high-level government representatives, who actually develop an aviation policy. It is a multi-agency approach to developing Fiji's policy at the national level for aviation. That Committee has ceased to exist. That is also a big requirement of Annex 17 - Aviation Security for ICAO.

Similarly, the National Facilitation Committee focusses on timely departures, arrivals, border clearance and customs. That Committee also ceased around the same time. It is responsible for setting facilitation standards for Fiji and ensuring that ICAO facilitation of

Annex 9 -Standards and Recommended Practices, are actually implemented in Fiji. For

the information of this forum, this is an area in which we are working hard on to improve our rating in terms of facilitation.

We have mentioned earlier the Advanced Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record for which the Government had sought the assistance of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. These are specific areas through these Committees which we need to address.

The following have been our successes in 2023:

1. We had the appointment of a new CAAF Board, the induction of eight new Board members with a new Chairperson. We had the appointment of CAAF's first female Chief Executive, Ms. Theresa Levestam, in 2023. After so many years of having the Acting Chief Executive, we finally had a female Chief Executive appointed in 2023, showing the trust and commitment in our Chief Executive.
2. The approval of the Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE). We had a JEE that reviewed the salary structure. There were salary adjustments and increases in terms of staff salary.
3. We had the ISO 9001-2015 recertification audit which was successful in 2023.
4. The establishment of the ICAO Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Liaison Office. We will be visiting that office upon the completion of this presentation, and you will have the opportunity to meet the ICAO PSIDS Liaison Officer who is based here.
5. We had new findings for CAAF audited financial statements for 2023, and this is the third year in a row that the Auditor-General had not raised any findings in relation to our audited financial statements.
6. There was also a comprehensive review of CAAF's organisation structure.
7. The review of aviation legislations to ensure they are fit for purpose.

8. We also had the USAP continuous monitoring approach audit for Fiji. This is an important audit because when ICAO sends an audit team on site, they look at the compliance and performance of our aviation security system. How secure are we in terms of compliance with the standards and practical security measures on the ground? Are we secured? That audit looked at all our aviation security systems in Fiji and identified areas that we need to strengthen.

There is always room for improvement. There are certain areas highlighted for us that we need to strengthen to comply. However, ICAO did not raise any significant security concern.

A significant security concern is the raising of an operational issue that is serious, which allows any perpetrator or person to access the aircraft without being screened, without all the security controls in place, or baggage and cargo that has an explosive device can go directly to the aircraft without being screened. That is how serious a significant security concern is.

For States that have received a significant security concern, it takes them years to address the concern because of the nature of such findings. We were very fortunate in Fiji that we did not have any significant security concern. Going forward, we need to ensure that we maintain that. In preparation for the Universal Security Audit Programme - Continuous Monitoring and Auditing (USAP-CMA) audit, there was one single-minded focus - ensure we do not have a significant security concern.

What does CAAF look forward to? Firstly, the Civil Aviation Master Plan that is being developed by Government. The Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) for Fiji, the sister audit of USAP, is a safety audit. It is tentatively set for 2026 where ICAO will come and look at all the safety measures in place and how we comply or do not comply with the standards.

Secondly, the review of the State Safety Programme and National Aviation Safety Plan. The review of the aviation security and facilitation programme is focussing on emerging technology, emerging threats to both safety and security, digitisation and digitalisation partnerships and explore alternative sources of funding.

In summary, CAAF managed to successfully implement its mandate and maintain safety and security of aviation. In terms of continuous improvement, we have improvement in the legislations, policies, processes and procedures, which had not been there previously, or which existed but needed to be amended to reflect the new standards of both, safety and security, that were being rolled out by CAAF.

We have a robust risk management, State safety risks and the organisation, in collaboration with the stakeholders and we maintain our corporate social responsibilities.

Through you, Deputy Chairperson, the Team is ready to fill any questions that the Committee may have. We have the respective subject matter experts on aviation with me, and I seek your approval for them to respond to any questions in their specific area of operations.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you Team CAAF for a very comprehensive and clear presentation on your Annual Report. I would like to now open the floor for questions from Members and I would like to start off. The mandate for CAAF is the effective aviation safety and security. Before I start, these questions are to deepen the understanding of the Committee and the public on what all goes on with your entity.

As CAAF's mandate is for aviation safety and security, there are two parts to this question. On what grounds does someone get on a flight with a weapon or a loaded gun? What policies or regulations are there for someone to do so and why? One is for a local, the other one is if a diplomat comes to Fiji and if they would bring their armed men to Fiji, what are the safety and security regulations and policies in place?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Deputy Chairperson, on what grounds for the carriage of firearms? Regulation 13 of the Civil Aviation (Security) Act 1994 specifies the provisions for the carriage of firearms in the aircraft, that is, in the cabin. Regulation 13 outlines that the person who is responsible for the carriage of firearms will need to do that if he or she is on official duty. Secondly, he or she will need the approval from the Commissioner of Police, CAAF and the aircraft operator.

The aircraft operator is responsible for everything that goes on board the aircraft. He has the final say. Carriage of firearms under Regulation 13 is in the cabin. For example, Close Protection Officers it with them as they go in the cabin. Under Regulation 13, they need the approval of the Commission of Police, the approval of CAAF and the approval of the aircraft operator.

Carriage of firearms in the hold comes under Air Navigation Regulations (ANR) 29, whereby the firearm is put in the cargo hold of the aircraft. Again, the issue of approval from CAAF for carriage in the hold.

There is a difference here. When firearms are carried in the hold, it does not pose any danger to aircraft or to passengers because it is inaccessible. When firearms are in the cabin, it is within the reach of persons within the cabin. Those are the two instances.

We have a legislation for the carriage of firearms. It is not illegal to carry firearms on board the aircraft, provided you comply with the requirements. The aircraft operators have a provision in the approved security programme which enables them to carry firearms either in the cabin or in the hold. That is, again, subject to ANR 29 for carriage in the hold and section 13 of the Civil Aviation (Security) Act 1994.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- How often does this happen? Were there cases of politicians also bypassing security checks when exiting or entering airports?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Deputy Chairperson, the first part of the question is, were there incidents and how often? Not often. There were reported incidents. There was one reported incident of carriage. The incidents that were unreported, I do not know how many incidents of carriage. Based on the information we have, there was only one reported mandatory occurrence report for the carriage of firearms. That is the reported incident. Incidents can also go unreported, and we would not be able to know unless someone raised it with us.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- There is a second part to that. In terms of aviation safety and security, were there cases of high-level people or politicians bypassing security checks when exiting and entering aircrafts?

MR. R. AISAKE.- We received unsubstantiated information in that respect. When I say unsubstantiated, people do not put it on paper and send it to us, “on such and such a time, at such and such a day, this is what happened”, and that is when we find out. People are not willing to put it on paper and send the document. What we have is what we stand by in terms of the documented evidence with us. If it is not on paper, then we would be working on something that is hearsay.

HON. V. LAL.- You spoke about three Treaties that have not been ratified by Fiji. As a responsible organisation, what are you doing about that? Are you taking this matter to the higher authorities and is there any progress? What is the position now?

MR. R. AISAKE.- In terms of the treaties, we have worked with the Government to provide a Cabinet Paper to address those three Treaties that we have not ratified. A draft Cabinet Paper is with Government on those specific Treaties.

The significance of these Treaties is ensuring that our airspace and security addresses the gaps that are highlighted by the Treaties to be able to translate that to national law. We are working with the Government. We have provided a draft Cabinet Paper in that respect through the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, addressing those three specific Treaties. For example, the Beijing Convention, the use of aircraft as a weapon and the use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons carried by aircraft, are all part of the Cabinet submission by CAAF.

HON. V. LAL.- So the delay is on the part of the Government, is it? How does CAAF play in addressing the challenges posed by the increasing use of the Pacific as a transit route for illicit drugs, which has led to the rise in local drug consumption and associated safety concerns?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Sir, CAAF has a National Air Transport Facilitation Programme which covers trafficking in drugs - a facilitation programme looking at measures to address that. Having said that, in terms of aviation security, the primary objective of aviation security is not the identification of drugs on board an aircraft, but to identify improvised explosive devices, as well as weapons that are carried on board the aircraft, because they can bring that aircraft down.

If you put drugs, for example, we have cocaine on board a particular aircraft. The aircraft will fly from Fiji, it will land in Sydney and there is no threat to the aircraft. However, if you put 250 grammes of Semtex on board that aircraft, that aircraft is not going to reach Sydney. It is going to fall. When you look at it from the aviation security standpoint, the focus is on improvised explosive devices and weapons going on board the aircraft because they will do harm. Improvised explosive devices, aircraft, you have the best pilot, you have the best engineer, but that aircraft is going to go down. It explodes.

Someone has access to the weapon on board the aircraft, he or she can conduct an act of unlawful interference. From an aviation security standpoint, that is not the focus. Our focus is that that aircraft must land, and the protection of the aircraft on route each journey to ensure it lands. If we have 100 kilogrammes of cocaine on board, the aircraft will still fly and land. If we have 250 grammes of Semtex 1A, it is going to blow up. That is the difference, and that is what we try in our awareness programmes with the aviation industry, which is the primary screening, both of all baggage, cabin baggage, and persons - carriage of these on the person, in their belongings, through cargo. If that happens, then that is a big threat for us.

In terms of drugs, we work closely with Police. In terms of Intelligence Customs, they advise us. We have Persons of Interest (POI). The border agencies receive the information in advance. They do their own risk assessment, screening, and at the border, they intervene. Border agencies, Police border agencies, and intelligence customs intervene based on that information.

We had mentioned in our presentation the Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record (PNR). The Advance Passenger Information (API) actually addresses that. Before the flights arrives, two hours to four hours before flight time, the border agencies receive a PNR, who is on board the aircraft. When you go to check in, the information is actually sent. Then the respective security databases come into play, it says POI or not POI. API and PNR are critical elements of the security chain in identifying persons who may pose the biggest threat to an aircraft.

That is in terms of facilitation, we, in Fiji, are trying our best to have this framework in place in close collaboration with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. They have the skills and expertise, the API, PNR, but we do not. Hence, the previous government had reached out to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime for their assistance in October 2021.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- I have a question on the staff turnover. I must commend the Chief Executive and Team for achieving the lowest turnover in December 2024 compared to the past 10 years. How has CAAF addressed the challenge of talent retention and skill development in the aviation sector? Is there any staff retention policy in place for the organisation? If so, has those retention strategies attracted some former workers to return?

MS. S. BOLANAVATU.- I will try and do my best in answering your question. Your question is related to what sort of retention strategies CAAF has employed in addressing the staff turnover. CAAF has reviewed some of its strategies that are in place and that included enhancing staff training, basically training and development. Training carries a huge chunk of our operational expenses for the Authority and that is also an ICAO requirement - in that, authorities need to have competent staff.

In the areas of oversight, the inspectors are actually conducting oversight on each of the specialised areas, and that they are more qualified than the organisation or the people that they are overseeing in the industry. One of the strategies is to continuously train our staff and meeting ICAO requirements.

CAAF has also improved some of the benefits that are made available to staff, one of which is the medical insurance. We have also reviewed the performance bonuses. That is usually paid out to staff depending on their performance. A performance appraisal is conducted every six months and that is implemented. We have wellness initiatives and established long service recognitions.

Additionally, CAAF is currently reviewing a scarcity framework for salary review, which is currently being developed to address salary disparities, particularly for critical roles, like aviation inspectors. To mitigate staffing shortages, CAAF has proactively filled 13 positions in 2024 and continues to actively recruit for vacant roles, whilst trying to offer attractive packages to attract staff to join our inspectorate team.

May I invite the Executive Manager of Corporate Services to add on to what I have just shared.

MR. N. PERERA.- One of the key implementations that we did was the JEE implementation. That was discussed from 2019 and was finally implemented in 2023.

With the new Board coming in and the new appointment of the Chief Executive, we managed to do that. That changed a lot of things because that was one of the key issues we had in 2019 until 2022. If you look at the number of staff who have been leaving, we managed to bring it down in 2023 and 2024. We have majorly brought it down. That is one of the key factors, I would say. At the same time, there were a lot of other initiatives, as Ms. Bolanavatu had explained.

We have brought in other elements, such as staff engaged in a lot of activities during office hours. They feel part of the whole organisation. That has made them feel some belonging, some togetherness, spirit and passion within staff. That has brought staff closer to each other. If there is anything, they come to HR and discuss. The open environment has created a lot of togetherness within staff. That has been one of the key elements whereby we have managed to retain staff within the organisation.

HON. P. RAVUNAWA.- I thank the CAAF Management for their comprehensive presentation that has been provided to the Committee this afternoon. I have a follow-up question, firstly, on HR.

In your previous Annual Report, it was recorded that more specialised technical staff left CAAF for overseas market. Perhaps, that is where honourable Tuicolo is coming from,

whether they have returned, or have you been able to recruit personnel of that calibre for the continuation of your service?

MR. N. PERERA.- Yes, Sir. We had a couple of staff coming back and rejoining CAAF. At the same time, we continuously keep looking for good technical staff wherever we can find, and we have brought them in. I would say it is a bit of both. We have managed to bring in some of the staff and at the same time, we have managed to recruit new staff into the organisation.

What we do is, even though there are gaps between certain staff when they come in, we use our training programmes just to develop them to get to that level. That has helped us bring in staff, even though they do not have the full qualification. We develop them so that it is an enhancement for their career as well, and then they remain with CAAF for years to come.

HON. P. RAVUNAWA.- With the confirmation of appointment of Chief Executive, that took a while and we thank the leadership that was provided to the organisation during those dark moments. It was mentioned that the National Aviation Committee became silent for quite a number of years. I would love to hear more about that, the work of that Committee. Has that Committee been re-established?

There was mention about ICAO Treaties that were presented to Parliament last year. I believe after a long time, you have a Minister dedicated to tourism and I believe honourable Gavoka is working on those Treaties. Before we accede to those three Treaties, does it affect your operation in any way while we are waiting for Cabinet and Parliament's endorsement for Fiji to accede to those three Treaties - the Beijing Protocol, the Beijing Convention and the Montreal Convention? I hope you can understand those three questions, coming in all at once.

MR. R. AISAKE.- In terms of the National Aviation Committee, this is a work in progress. We have engaged with the Ministry for Tourism and Civil Aviation, and we are working out a time to engage with the respective members of the National Aviation Committee. This Committee is on the PS level, so getting all the PSs who are part of the Committee to be present every single day, is quite difficult and challenging. We have written and sought the assistance of the Ministry, and they are liaising with the respective members of the Committee for a time with which the Committee can convene at the national level.

We have also recommended to reduce the membership of the respective Committee. Currently, we have about 15 members to 20 members as part of the membership of the

National Aviation Committee and the National Facilitation Committee. They also sit on both Committees. We are looking at reducing it to a manageable level of six. Thereafter, if there is an issue, we can co-opt the relevant PSs. For example, if the Ministry of Health has an issue regarding a pandemic like COVID-19, then we can co-opt and seek assistance from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to have an SME attend a meeting and provide a brief on the matter, rather than have 15 members and try to get all of them present at a particular date for the meeting. We are looking at reducing it to address that.

We have written to the Ministry, and we are working with them on identifying, and we are awaiting their response with the respective PSs and then coming back on a date whereby we look at the membership of the National Aviation Committee because that is critical.

On the Treaties, by not ratifying the Treaties, it does not directly impact us in terms of our operations. However, when it comes to audit, I gave you some audits that we had, in terms of legislation, we do not have it. It is one of the things they look for. Where is it documented in your legislation on these requirements, for example, API and PNR? It is critical in the legislation and a critical aspect of aviation security. We do not have it in our legislation as yet. We have included it in the revised draft. It has now been included. In terms of audit, we are marked down on documentation.

Legal framework, we do not have any primary legislation covering API or PNR. In terms of carriage of use of aircraft as a weapon of destruction, that has yet to be included in the revised legislation. It has been included in the revised legislation, but it is yet to become law. Those are the things arising from these respective Conventions and protocols that we need to include.

In terms of practically impacting us, we have not seen any impact of that but when it comes to audit, we are audited against that, “Show me where it is in your national programme or national legislation? Do you have provisions to protect against this?”

HON. P. RAVUNAWA.- I noticed that CAAF has three Acts that you are operating on, the 1976, 1979 and 1999. Have you been able to synchronise or to have one legislation that would help CAAF in acceding to these Treaties as well?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Through you, Deputy Chairperson, may I ask our Manager Legal to answer that question?

MS. F. TAKINANA.- Honourable Members, CAAF is currently working with the Ministry to consolidate our aviation safety laws into one consolidated law. The security one will be standalone.

Currently, my department has drafted the two Bills, one for security and one for safety, which is the consolidated version. It is a huge project and requires a little bit of political will and push. We are currently working with the Ministry to have that pushed up this year before our audit next year.

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- On page 23 of your Annual Report, I noticed the pre-tax loss of \$617,359 in 2023. What strategies are being implemented to enhance financial stability while maintaining a high standard of aviation safety and security?

MR. N. PERERA.- Currently, we have three ways that CAAF can get the income coming in - one is the Government grant that we get and the other one is the service we provide to our counterparts. The third one is the departure tax. What we normally do is, we put all our expenses to one and then look at the income coming in and then the balance will go to the Government grant. Every time when we go and ask for the Government grant, we ask for what we really need. There are times that the full Government grant that we requested for is being granted, but there are times when the full Government grant is not given. Last year, we had a similar situation. We requested something and we did not everything we wanted. Those are the issues that we have seen.

We are trying to look at possibilities of being self-sufficient. Currently, our Board is really working on it. We have our own CAAF land that we are trying to develop. Those are the things we are looking at. We are totally dependent on the Government grant, which is coming in, which is one of the biggest parts of revenue.

Whatever is said and done, we will not sacrifice by any means the safety and security oversight. We always do that. If we have to, we will sacrifice wherever we can from the budget, and make sure that we provide the services which is required to keep the Fiji sky safe.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- In a matter of screening, again, safety and security, we are looking at domestic flights. We had an annual report with BAF, we conducted site visitations and consultations. We realised that the screening machine is outdated. They requested for a machine that was costing almost \$2 million. In good faith, we have put it across to the Government, but it will be coming in the report as well.

We also travelled to Qamea, Taveuni, and came back. When we look at domestic flights, our borders are porous. You talk about Semtex and firearms versus Semtex. You want to land the plane, that is more important, and you do not want it to explode in the air, as you have alluded to. What if these instruments of taking down a plane comes from the waters, the borders of these islands, or when someone gets on a flight, they do not go through any screening, any physical checks?

On the flight, for example, from Taveuni to Nadi and something goes wrong, what do you have to say about those gaps that exist? It still lands on CAAF compound with our international flights here as well. How do you address those gaps? What are your thoughts on that or what should be done to address those gaps?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Firstly, the BAF screening machine focusses on pests and all border items, the contrabands that come through the border, as opposed to the aviation security machines which focus on explosives and what goes on board. For BAF, it is what comes out of the aircraft into Fiji. For aviation security screening equipment, it is what goes on board the aircraft. What comes out, strictly on aviation security perspective, that is not something that we really focus our primary resources on. What comes off the aircraft, that becomes a border agency. The equipment for BAF focusses on pests or contraband that comes out of the aircraft into Fiji's borders. Aviation security, everything that goes on board the aircraft prior to departure. That is the first one on biosecurity.

The second one in terms of the security situation on domestic flights, we work closely with the Police Special Branch in terms of the risk context statement and threat assessments for the aviation industry in Fiji. We work closely in terms of intelligence to ensure that our scarce resources are not deployed in certain areas where there is no assessed threat.

Aviation security works on the principle of assessed threat and intelligence. It has to be intel-driven to be able to determine your security measures. If the security measures do not have a basis for increasing security, for example, with the islands, our domestic airports, the assessed threat by both, Special Branch and CAAF in relation to screening, is negligible, it is very low.

The rationale there is, why should we deploy scarce resources to all the domestic airports when you have an assessed threat as low, almost negligible? However, we are mandated by the Civil Aviation

Act for security-designated airports - screening out of security-designated airports at Nausori and Nadi.

Previously, we have had media comments on Labasa. Why no screening? Because the assessed threat is low. There is no intelligence to suggest that the threat level has gone up. That was why. Previously, when government had wanted screening to be implemented in Labasa, we looked at the assessment, and Government's policy was 'friendly north'. We want to develop that. How do you reconcile 'friendly north' with having additional security measures in place that require screening?

That contradicts the policy. You say it is a 'friendly north' and then you go ahead and beef up with screening equipment in Labasa, Savusavu and Taveuni. What are we basically saying? Friendly, but people who travel, once you are subject to screening, you know the threat level has gone up. The question we pose is, what has gone up? Has the threat level changed? Has the assessed threat level changed? Is there any intelligence to suggest that the threat level has changed that we need to vary all requirements? Can you imagine flying to Labasa, Savusavu and Taveuni, where we have to be screened all the time? Everyone knows everyone and it does not make sense. Security must make sense.

If there is a change in the threat level, yes. In terms of drugs and porous borders, yes, we work with Police, sharing whatever information on persons of interest, on travel patterns, on specific days, so that is shared by the intelligence community, with us, and vice versa.

Yes, we have a drug problem. Perhaps, that has become more pronounced with the media, the coverage of drugs. In terms of aviation, there have been allegations that drugs have been carried through aviation, but we have not got specific documented evidence to suggest that has happened. Yes, we work closely with the airlines and the Police in terms of that. Coming back to my initial point, domestic, the assessed threat level is negligible or low, but it does not mean that we are not monitoring that, together with Special Branch.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- I would like to respond to that, I absolutely disagree. It is like CAAF is not aware of the complexities of transnational crimes. We are looking at the influx of drugs, but human trafficking. We cannot be living with a blind eye saying it is a 'friendly north', and nothing is going to go down there. Try and visit the borders of Savusavu and the Islands and you see the kind of people who have come through these yachts, they have been smuggled through.

If someone gets a 3D printer, makes up a gun, gets on a flight, out of his mind, on a domestic flight, hijacks a plane, for example, Fiji will not be negotiating with a terrorist of

any sort, and then the fact that we should not wait for the storm to hit us, that is my point. We should not be in a position to ever deal or negotiate with a terrorist.

Moving forward, in terms of transnational crimes, does CAAF have any or can you highlight some of the MOUs you have? I think you have done that previously, but it is a question I noted down. Some of the current MOUs that you have, even if Fiji Intelligence Unit is on board as well, in dealing with the complexities of transnational crimes.

MR. R. AISAKE.- In terms of transnational crimes, we work closely with Special Branch. We are aware of the threats that are around us. It is not to say it is not primarily our function to deal with it. We are not aware, no. We are responsible for the risk context statement and the threat assessment of aviation environment in Fiji. That is where transnational crime and drug trafficking become part of that risk context statement.

When the Special Branch and CAAF sit, it is not just looking at aviation related, but we look at security in totality. Porous borders and the measures that are in place. For porous borders, you have the border agencies and the Combined Law Agency Groups (CLAG). That is the first line of defence at the border. They address the border issues. Then you have layers. Aviation security works around the layers. What you may see as one layer, you may not see in the other layers.

To address the question of drugs, we have that factored into the security assessment. When I say security assessment, it is both security intelligence and practical application on the ground. It is not something we look at in isolation and say that is not our problem, it certainly is. We are aware of that. It goes into our assessment.

We work with Special Branch, which is the Fiji Government's official intelligence provider, to address that. Special Branch – there is the intelligence. CAAF looks at it, assesses and that goes into the threat assessment, so the threat assessment is done in totality. It is not just looking at one component but is done in totality. We have respective CLAGs that address at respective levels.

The national security machinery is such that from porous borders, you have the CLAGs for the respective agencies. For CAAF, our contribution to that threat assessment is specific from the aviation point, while taking into consideration all the intelligence that Special Branch provides.

When you are talking about a security environment, you are not just looking at aviation, you are looking at all the threats surrounding us - porous borders, emerging threat of terrorism, cyber-security, carriage of improvised explosive devices, Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) attacks, and looking at diverse things, from our intel sources and

partners abroad - the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, so those are some of the things that Special Branch brings to the table.

When we sit down to make an assessment, we look at this component. Looking at the threat is one thing, and do we have the intent and capability within is another. You might say, "Alright, we are going to use chemical, biological and nuclear on the aircraft." First thing we ask, is there an intent? Do we have intent around? Do we have capability, people who can use chemical, biological or nuclear? Is that readily available to manufacture that type of device and put it on the aircraft? No.

Threat equals to intent plus capability. If there is no intent, there is no threat and no capability. I can say, "We are going to bomb the aircraft." But if I do not know how to make an improvised explosive device, if I do not know how to put together a bomb, I am just talking. It does not make sense. When we are talking about threat to the security environment, we are looking at, does someone have the intent to do it? Why? Does someone have the capability?

Yes, there is a lot of porous borders, we have drugs coming in, and we are aware of that. That is factored into our security assessment. When you say that we are just looking at the one dimension, no. That is part of our assessment. In a few weeks' time, we are meeting with Special Branch to review the risk on the threat level. That is where the National Intelligence Committee decides the threat level for our airports. They see it, they look at the assessed threat, and they make a call. For example, Fiji to the US northbound flights, it is higher than Fiji to Brisbane or Fiji to Auckland.

That is why it is important to revive these national committees because they are the ones who actually drive that policy. We cannot drive it from the CAAF level, it has to be at the national level. That is where your concerns, Sir, are being addressed in terms of threat assessment.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- A supplementary question to that, some of the airports have explosive tests. Do we have that here, or are we sitting and waiting for an intent to come forward?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Through you, Deputy Chairperson, we have threat explosive capability at our airports. As I had mentioned in my presentation, the screening equipment is configured to identify improvised explosive devices.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Is this on passengers?

MR. R. AISAKE.- Yes. As you walk through the screening equipment, it can detect if you are carrying explosives on you as a person, on your cabin bag, or if you hold back its contents.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Is that the latest technology, or at some airports they will take samples of your fingerprints or just your hand, or if you have ever been in contact with some sort of substance? What is the difference between this and that?

MR. R. AISAKE.- What you are describing is the random testing of improvised explosive devices, where you have the explosive test detection, which will detect any explosives on your fingers, on your bags, the opening of the bags, the zips and the pockets. When they swab it, if you have been in contact with, for example, gunpowder or explosive material, it will pick up on the swab.

As part of screening measures, you have random selection. Maybe five of us are going through the screening. The first, the second, the third will not be pulled aside, but the fourth one will be pulled aside and will be asked to swab both on the hands, on the zips of your carry-on bag and on the pockets. That is random sampling of explosive trace to determine whether you have handled explosives. That is another measure for determining whether you have been in contact with explosives.

If it identifies, then they will need to validate, maybe for my further question. Why? Where did this come from? We have that system where it addresses the problem.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- I thank CAAF for their timely submission of their Annual Report. I believe you are one of the best ones. Today, we are deliberating your last year's report.

I have two questions. One, going forward about the development of your land. Now, NASA has been removed. I am from the Ministry of Health and I know some of the health officials are residents of your compound here in the CAAF compound. Some of them have issues with rubbish collection, which is also a hazard. We have dengue outbreak in Nadi, right up to Sigatoka and Rakiraki.

Two, on page 17 of your 2023 Annual Report, there are a total of 64 human resources for CAAF. Are those 64 here in Nadi, or also in Labasa and other stations?

MR. N. PERERA.- Currently, if you look at the CAAF land development, we have quite a company of lawyers to handle this situation because we have 54 settlers within the property. It is a bit of a worry for us. We have already handed that over to the lawyers and

they are currently working on that. We have not communicated anything to anyone right now because we do not want it to be blown out of proportion. So, we just wanted to keep it very confidential. That is one part of it.

We currently have tendered for a company to do a master plan for us. We are working on that as well. That is part of the CAAF land development. I hope I have answered enough. It is still in progress, so we cannot give you a lot of information.

With regards to the staff, we have one head office that is here, and all staff operate from our head office. We do not have any other branches of CAAF anywhere else. It is all operated from here. If we want to go and do an audit, we will have staff in our plan, they will leave from here. If they have to stay back, they will stay back, do the audit, and then come back. That is how we operate. The staff operate from the main office from Nadi.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- When we see the CAAF fire trucks beside the air terminal, when you go to Labasa, are they not part of your staff ?

MS. S. BOLANAVATU.- CAAF is just a regulator for security and safety operations in Fiji. I believe you are alluding to Fiji Airports. Fiji Airports is the air navigation service provider, and it manages Fiji's two international airports and 15 domestic airports. The land that we are currently on, used to be owned by CAAF prior to the restructure in 1999, but now it is owned by Fiji Airports. Fiji Airports owns the estate that we are on and they also own the housing, the residential quarters that used to be previously owned by CAAF.

With regards to your question on the provision of fire services, that is one of the functions of Fiji Airports as part of their responsibility as the airport operator.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- I saw the air safety department licencing and accreditation of radars. With the air flying school in their premises, in terms of the capacity or the competency of the graduates from the flying school provider, are they meeting your standard? We see a lot of white people still flying our domestic aeroplanes.

MS. S. BOLANAVATU.- As part of our regulatory functions, our licencing, certification and surveillance applications, we are required to certify organisations such as the flying school to operate under the requirements, under the regulations. For personal licencing, the Authority is responsible for overseeing the training programmes that the flying schools provide to the students as part of the certification. For the licence holders, personal licensing is also another obligation of the Authority, to issue licences. I hope I have answered your questions.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- When you give them the licence, they are able to fly our aeroplanes.

Just a last question; I know the aerodrome accident in Gau. They mentioned that it was due to the dog that crossed the aerodrome. What about the one in Yasawa? Does CAAF may be litigate or compensate for it? It is good that there was no casualty but does CAAF provide compensation along that line? I am sorry for that dumb question.

MR. I.T. WAQA.- I look after Air Safety Department which is flight operations and airworthiness of aircraft. At the outset, there is still a bit of misunderstanding on what CAAF does. People sometimes see CAAF as AFL. We are like the LTA of aviation. We certify organisations and we give them licences. We do not provide the services.

When you look at airports, all the equipment on the airport is run by the airport operator which is Fiji Airports Limited. All the equipment, like the fire trucks, belong to Fiji Airports. That is not ours.

When you look at airports, all the equipment on the airport is run by the airport operator which is Fiji Airports Limited. All the equipment, like the fire trucks, belong to Fiji Airports. That is not ours. We oversight the organisation of Fiji Airports and give them a certificate for standards, and then we say, “You comply with the standards, then you can provide the service at the airport.” That is what we do.

As far as flying schools, it is the same thing. There is an applicant who will apply to start a flying school. So, CAAF receives the application and go through the requirements and say, “Alright, in order for you to have a flying school, you must meet these requirements.” You must have an organisation, you must have a CEO, you must have instructors, you must have a Chief Executive, and you must have resources. When you meet all those, then we give you a licence to open a flying school. Once you have a flying school, we come and check out your instructors. Are they qualified? Your programmes, do they teach what is required to become a proper pilot? That is what we do. We do not actually provide a service of having a flying school because we are the regulator. I hope that is clear.

As far as the accidents, the Gau accident, those are the two that were mentioned on the slide. The accident in Gau was not because of a dog. The aircraft flew downwind and then came in low and landed in the tailwind. You have to land into a headwind because it slows the aircraft's speed over the ground. However, it landed in a tailwind, it landed about halfway down the runway. It was going at high speed and then veered off the runway and damaged the aircraft. Thankfully there were no fatalities.

The one near Yasawa is similar, it landed in a tailwind downhill. It landed fast. I think the aircraft did not have – the wings have a flap in the back to slow it down so that it can land. It did not have that extended so it landed very fast and ran out of runway and then steered off into the soft sand. That is what stopped it. When they interviewed the pilot, he said, “No, I landed properly.” But there was a man filming, taking a video of him and screaming in over the runway and that is how the accident happened.

HON. A.N. TUICOLOR.- We are aware that CAAF does the drone registration. How many drones are currently registered with the organisation? Has any of the registered drones breached the terms and conditions of its permit? Was there a time unregistered drones flying in the areas within the close vicinity of the airport?

MR. I.T. WAQA.- Drones in Fiji is something of very high activity. We get like 80 inquiries a month. These are the people bringing in drones into the country. It is a good thing they notify us because when it comes through Customs, they notify us.

There are two divisions within drones. You can have a recreational drone, which is limited to certain places where you can operate, and certain drones, they call a geofencing software, which prevents it from operating within a certain radius of an airport. I believe the DJI drones are like that, but I am not sure. I have been told that they have removed that.

If you have one of those drones and you get it off a flight, for example, from Sydney, going to the car park in the airport, you want to start it up, it will not start, because the GPS senses that it is within the airport-restricted airspace. The commercial drones have to go through an approval process. They have to apply and go through CAAF.

The issue with CAAF, as has been mentioned here is that, we do not have a proper legislation. In fact, we only have one right now, that is why the need for it. We saw from the Critical Elements what they are calling CE1, primary legislation, and CE2, specific operating legislation. CE1 is all the Acts of Parliament. CE2 is the specific operating legislation, it is the legislation we give to the operator and say, “That is how you operate.”

If a drone operator wants to operate a drone, for example, and want to do some crop dusting, there is a couple of them doing crop dusting now using drones, we enable and license them. We check out their drones, give them a licence, give them a permit, and there is a crop-dusting price. There are three operators. Those are commercial drones.

There are other ones doing residential for real estate and taking pictures. If you go to *YouTube*, you will see some of these pictures. Those are from drones, and they are licensed. From CAAF's point of view, we are working very closely with the Legal Department to try and get our legislation up to date. They are way, way out of date. You cannot regulate when you do not have the rules.

Another area where there are problems is, there is an operator here who does skydiving. You go up in a plane and you parachute. Our laws specifically prohibit that. The Air Navigation Regulations (ANR), as already mentioned, prohibits it. How do we get them to operate? We give them an exemption, which means that now, the State takes responsibility. They have been operating that for many years. Those are some of the reform issues that are required right at the top so that we, as an aviation regulator, are able to do our work properly. We are just a regulator, we are not a service provider.

When you enable us, then we can oversight. CAAF is called a State safety oversight organisation. We oversight but we do not provide services. We are both, aviation safety and aviation security oversight. We do not provide services. We just come to you and say, "Where is your licence?" We send our inspectors down to Fiji Airways, we will do a spot check on the ground, go to the pilot and ask, "Where is your licence?" If he or she does not have a current pilot's licence, we remove him, even if he is an Australian. You cannot operate, your licence is expired, your medical is expired. The engineers will go down and have a look at the aircraft.

We are the regulators so hopefully, that clears some of the perceptions about CAAF. I would ask, Deputy Chairperson, that the next time, the Committee distinguishes between CAAF and AFL. They are service providers, and we are the regulators. We issue certificate to operate.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- It is a sort of a collective effort with the AFL, Fiji Airways and CAAF, so I think we can always get your views and ideas of what it could be and what it cannot be.

My final question, due to time constraints, I know there is a site visitation coming up as well but this is quite very important. When you look at our sugar industry, we have ageing farmers, and it has its issues. There has been a lot of talk about ethanol as biofuel. One tonne produces 70 litres to 100 litres of ethanol and has about 76,000 BTU per gallon.

When I look at page 47, your sustainable aviation initiatives talk about a lot of goals to reach by 2050. Is there any assessment done on the carbon footprint of the planes that

land here, that are at bay here, and during flight take-offs? What are your thoughts on biofuel, going forward, with uplifting the sugar industry, the farmers of Fiji, but also for greener operations and a lower carbon footprint as a whole?

MR. I.T. WAQA.- Deputy Chairperson, you have raised quite an important question. In aviation, ICAO drives Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). Fiji Airways has started implementing that. They had one of the flights last year from Singapore to Fiji, they topped up and 5 percent of the fuel was SAF. The programme is in place. The issue is, not every airport has the facility to have the fuel, but the goals are there to achieve that. As far as carbon footprint, if you go on to any booking on any airline now, you will see that any flight will have carbon emissions. Aviation, in fact, has one of the lowest carbon dioxide emissions in any industry. It is something like 2 percent of global carbon given by aviation. In the aviation industry, aviation engines produce very little carbon. If you go to the cooler countries, you will see chemtrails. It is the condensation trails. You will see them in the sky because the air is very cold, it condenses moisture, and it is the temporary clogging. That is not just moisture. For CAAF, we do not have measurements of those. That is for the industry.

Through standards and participation in ICAO conferences, these are very important subject matters that are discussed directly at general level and between the States. Hopefully, that answers your question, Deputy Chairperson.

MS. S. BOLANAVATU.- I would like to also provide some insight on what CAAF, with the Ministry, Fiji Airways and Fiji Airports is doing to try and reduce the carbon footprint in Fiji. The State has published the State Action Plan to reduce carbon emission. To answer your question, Fiji Airways has provided a historical data on the fuel burn for each of their flights. There are also mechanisms of monitoring the carbon emission for the services they have.

In the State Action Plan, ICAO has developed a tool for all States to use the historical data on what carbon has been emitted and putting measures in place for us to reduce the carbon footprint. To answer your question, yes, we have a State Action Plan. It was signed off by the honourable Minister this year, and it contains all the mitigations and measures in place for us to reduce carbon emission. My colleague has rightfully mentioned that one of the mitigations is the use of sustainable aviation fuel, which has already been implemented by Fiji Airways.

About what is the State doing to use the crops that we have, like sugarcane, cassava, yes, I was part of a feasibility study that was conducted last year on identifying some of

the possible feedstocks that we would use - cassava or sugarcane, to see if it was viable for Fiji. It is not cheap, there will be a lot of processing plants, and it would require to ascertain whether we have sufficient cassava or sugarcane or whatever alternatives that we could use to feed, in order to get sustainable aviation fuel. I am not sure where we are at right now with that study, but we will be able to provide the information to you after this, if you would like to have access to the information.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, please.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- That was an interesting measure of carbon footprint. My question would be about the radiation that are emitted from these airlines. The level of radiation when one of these aeroplanes take off from our runway. Do you have a mechanism to measure the level of radiation? This is to do with health and safety. Does it affect the officers who are on the ground? They can collect this scattered radiation that are emitted from airlines, and it can accumulate in their body. Eventually, they can have cancer and other sickness. Is CAAF aware of that?

MS. S. BOLANAVATU.- ICAO work closely with the International Telecommunications Union, which is the international body that is responsible for managing radio frequency spectrum. In Fiji, the Ministry of Communication is responsible for managing the allocation of these frequencies for the entire spectrum. With the aeronautical frequency spectrum, which is the frequency range that is used in aviation, it has been allocated by the International Telecommunication Union, which is the national body responsible for managing the frequency spectrum.

They have international radio regulations that specifies the frequencies to be used and for which application and the power that is used. CAAF, in consultation and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji, is the organisation responsible for issuances of radio licence in Fiji to everyone who are actually transmitting or broadcasting on these frequencies.

For any operator that wishes to apply for a licence, they will need to be operating on the aeronautical spectrum, CAAF will be working with TAF. They will have to seek our advice, and it is only through our approval that they will be able to issue any licence to any operator who wishes to broadcast on that particular frequency band. We have provisions in place on the frequency spectrum and the power that they actually operate to broadcast on. It is safe, and it is in accordance with what the requirements are.

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you for the explanation. In fact, it was a very interesting question because I have just found out that the secondary radiation, cosmic radiation, and solar radiation that eventually accumulates, does affect people. Our facilities and research is quite not there yet to even measure these things because I am sure with the screening machines too, there are radiations that are emitted as well.

On that note, honourable Members, thank you to the CAAF Management. It has been a very interesting session. To be very honest, if this was in Parliament, I would have pulled this for maybe another one hour. We look forward to the site visitations. I sincerely thank you all for availing yourselves and for your time. If the Committee has further queries on this matter, we will reach out to you.

Thank you for your honesty because it helps deepen our understanding and to table this to Parliament and tell the people of this country the work that is being done, the challenges before us and what we need to do in going forward as a nation and as one. On that note I close this meeting.

The Committee adjourned at 5.03 p.m.

Written Responses



CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF FIJI

**SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE –
CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF FIJI
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**



CONTENTS

01 General Overview

02 Trends & Analysis on Achievements

03 Sustainable Development Goals

04 Challenges

05 Future Outlook

01

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- WHY DOES CAAF EXIST?
- WHAT IS CAAF'S MANDATE?
- STATE SAFETY & SECURITY OVERSIGHT
- STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
- CAAF STRUCTURE

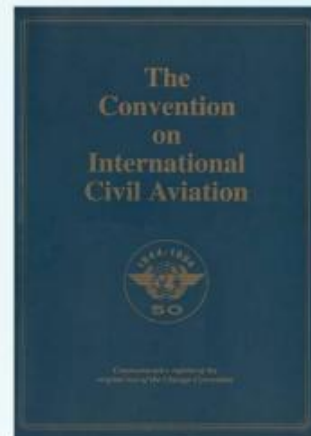


WHY DOES CAAF EXIST?

World War II



Chicago Convention



INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION



INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION (ICAO)

- Specialised agency of the UN, NOT A GLOBAL REGULATOR

FIJI

- Signatory to the Chicago Convention - State obligated to fulfill its responsibilities
- Established the Civil Aviation Act 1976
- Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979 - statutory body to discharge the State's responsibilities & serve as the guardian of aviation safety and security.

WHAT IS CAAF'S MANDATE ?

Civil Aviation Act 1976 –gives effect to the International Civil Aviation Convention

Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979 – establishes CAAF

Civil Aviation (Security) Act 1994 – protection of civil aviation from acts of unlawful interference and airport security.

Civil Aviation Reform Act 1999 - reorganization under the Public Enterprise Act



Functions of CAAF (section 14 CAAF Act 1979)

- Civil Aviation Act 1976, CAAF Act 1979, Civil Aviation Reform Act 1999
- Fiji's obligations as a member state of ICAO
- Regulating the safety and security of civil aviation operations in Fiji
- Safety-related functions

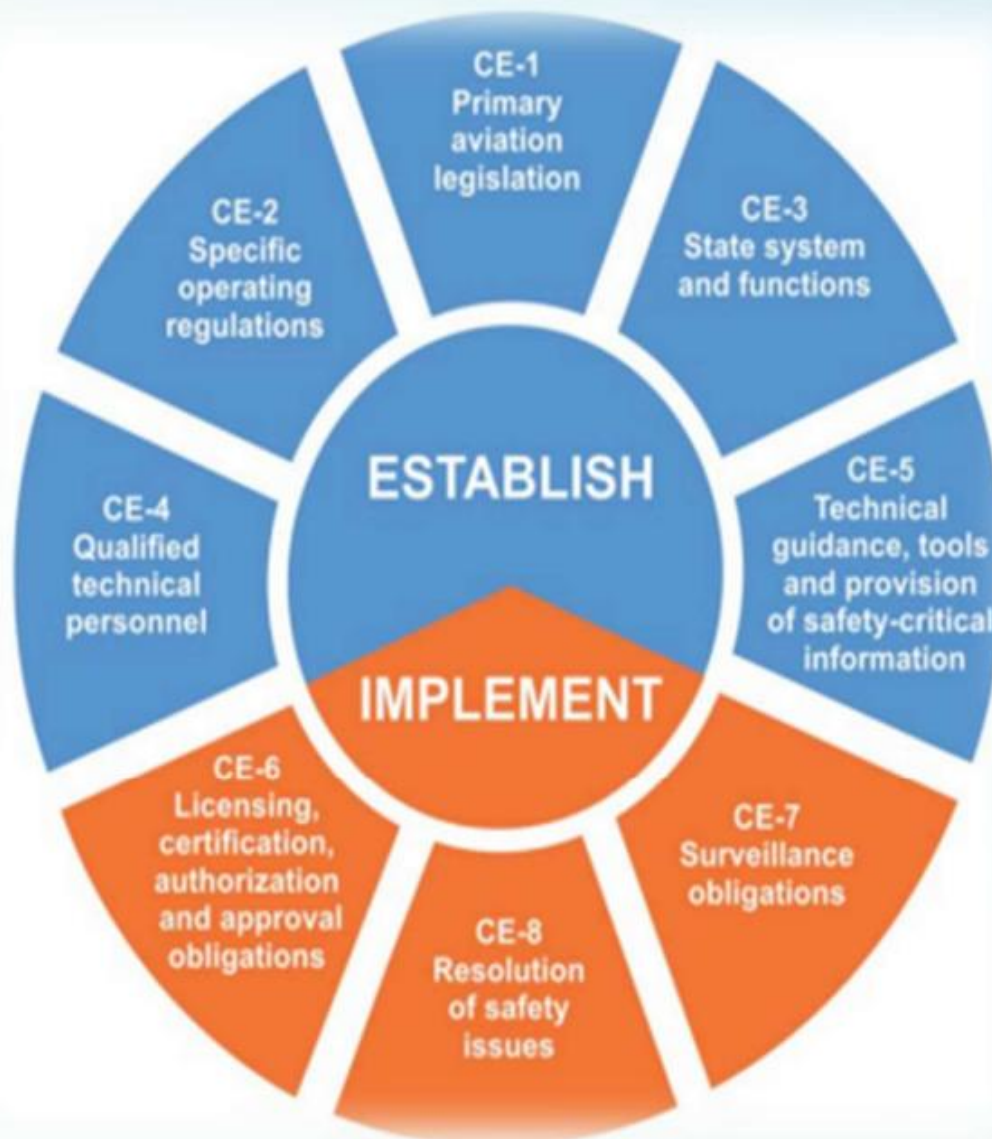
Funding (section 20 CAAF Act 1979)

- CAAF's property, investments, mortgages and any money earned from this;
- Fees and Charges levied by CAAF (F&C Regs)
- Sums borrowed by CAAF to meet our obligations;
- Other sums or property payable to or vested in CAAF in relation of matters incidental to our duties.

Additional Funds (Airport Dep Tax Regs 1986)

- \$5 paid to CAAF

STATE SAFETY and SECURITY OVERSIGHT



Critical elements - 8

Ensure discharge of responsibilities/functions - compliant with Chicago Convention.

Implementation - provides assurance of an effective and sustainable Safety/Security Oversight System.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

PURPOSE

Safeguard the well-being and prosperity of Fijians by ensuring the utmost safety and security of air transportation.

VISION

To be a leader in aviation safety and security oversight in the Pacific, recognised for excellence in regulation, partnership, and service delivery.



MISSION

To partner with stakeholders to ensure the highest standards of safety, security, and efficiency in civil aviation, fostering sustainable development and connectivity for Fiji and her people.

VALUES

Professionalism



We will conduct ourselves to the highest standards.

Integrity



Our actions will be guided by integrity

Fair



We will be fair, without favoritism or discrimination.



Partnership



We will partner with stakeholders to ensure of mission remains on track

Innovation

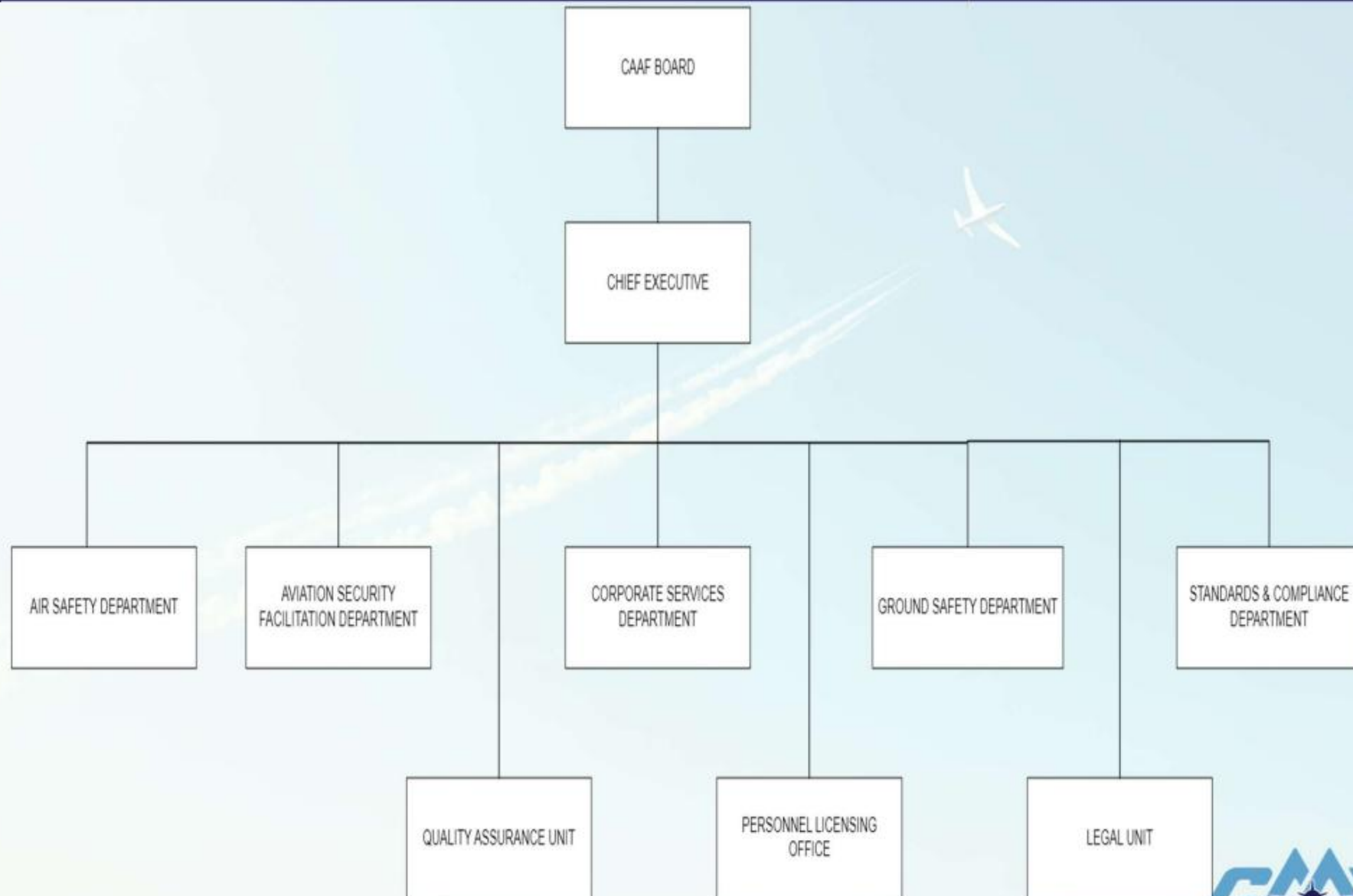


We encourage innovation to improve our aviation system

SAFE SKIES, SECURE FIJI



CAAF STRUCTURE



CAAF STRUCTURE

Budgeted Positions 77

- Staff in position 72
- Vacancies 5
- Appointments 13
- Staff turnover 1.41%

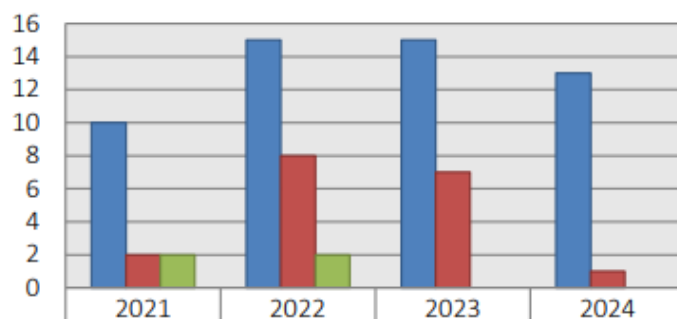
*lowest in 10yrs (2022/2023 - 10%)

- Male 64% (46)
- Female 36% (26)

- Females in Executive Roles – 50% (3/3)

- Females in Senior Management Roles - 33% (2/6)

STAFF TURNOVER 2021 - 2024



Appointments	10	15	15	13
Resignation/Retirement	2	8	7	1
Contract Expiry	2	2	0	0

02

TRENDS & ANALYSIS ON ACHIEVEMENTS

- HOW IS SUCCESS MEASURED?

HOW IS SUCCESS MEASURED?

Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program – Effective Implementation (EI) Scores & Absence of Significant Safety Concerns

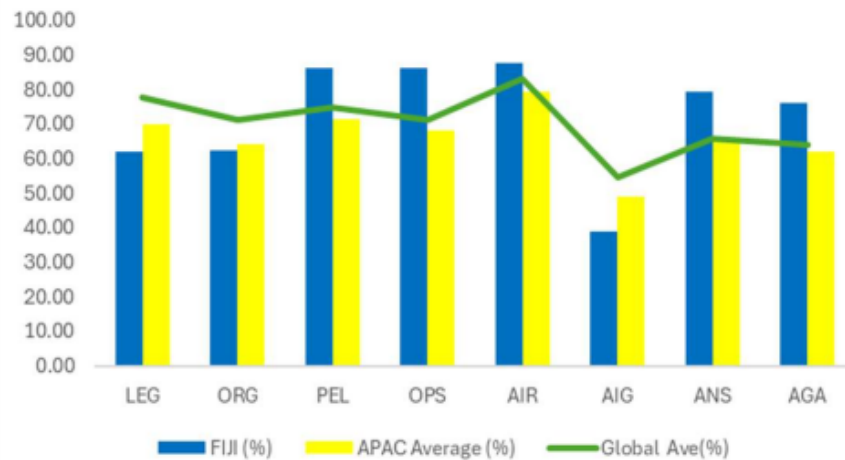
- **AUDITED 2019 WITH NEXT AUDIT TENTATIVELY IN 2026**
- **EI SCORE OF 76.25% (GLOBAL AVG 70%; APAC AVG 66.6%)**
- **NIL SIGNIFICANT SAFETY CONCERN RAISED**



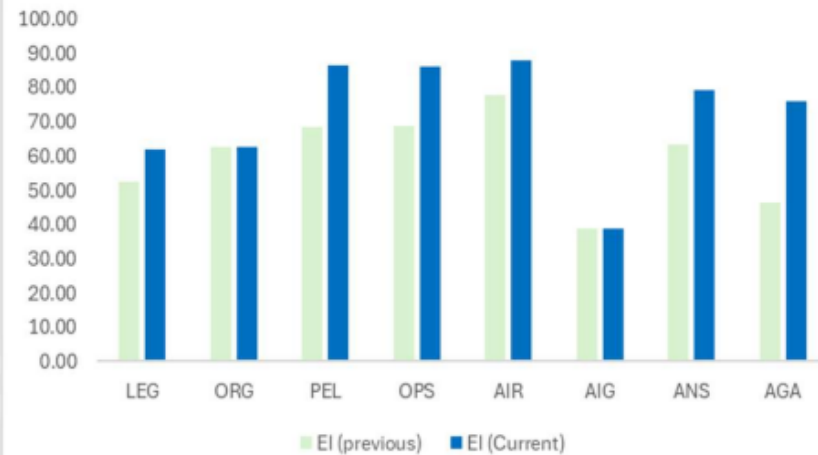
ICAO COUNCIL PRESIDENT CERTIFICATE
ISSUED TO FIJI (2023) FOR INCREASE IN EI
SCORES BY MORE THAN 15%

HOW IS SUCCESS MEASURED?

EI% per Audit Area

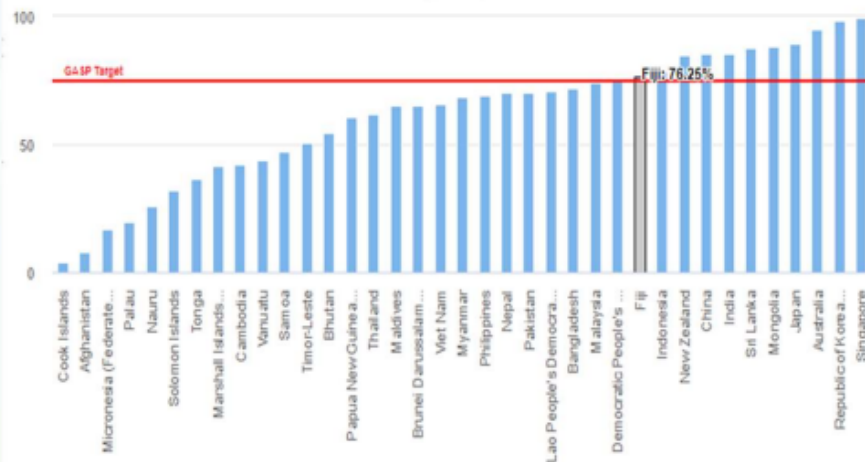


EI% per Audit Area



USOAP Audit Results

Fiji in APAC



Overall effective implementation:

Safety oversight 76.25%

Safety:-

Ranked 11/37 in APAC.

Fiji rates above the average of the APAC regions.

HOW IS SUCCESS MEASURED?

Universal Security Audit Program Ratings & Absence of Significant Security Concerns

- **SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE ICAO USAP-CMA AUDIT IN JUNE 2023**
- **NIL SIGNIFICANT SECURITY CONCERN RAISED**
- **ACHIEVED A HEALTHY SECURITY RATING**
- **PRIVILEGE OF HOSTING ICAO AUDITOR TRAINING – 3 FROM FIJI (ALL SUCCESSFUL)**

HOW IS SUCCESS MEASURED?

FIJI's ACCIDENT RATES



Fiji had maintained a zero-fatal accident rate since 2020.

Accidents involving DQ-FIC and DQ-VAN (nil casualties) added to the Year 2024.

No.	Date/Time	Title	Aircraft Type	Reg Mark	Location
1	23 Jul 2024	DQ-FIC RUNWAY EXCURSION – AC CIDENT	BN2A-21 Islander	DQ-FIC	Gau
2	21 Dec 2024	DQVAN- Aircraft Accident at NFS W	GA8-TC-320	DQ-VAN	Yasawa

03

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- WHAT ARE THE SDGs
APPLICABLE TO CAAF
- HOW IS CAAF
CONTRIBUTING TO THESE



SDGs APPLICABLE TO CAAF ACTIVITY

- *Aviation activity under ICAO aligns with/supports, the UN SDGs.*
- *Aviation's (ICAO/CAAF) initiatives, regulations, standards promote safe, secure and sustainable aviation – complementing many of the SDGs.*
- *Foundation and catalyst for the realisation of the SDGs (totally/partly). Progressing the SDGs through aviation - work in progress*
- *Fiji (contracting state to ICAO) - CAAF supports the SDGs via the aviation pathways that influence or promote realisation of SDGs.*
- *The ICAO's Objectives are strongly linked to 15 of the 17 SDGs*
 - *cascades into CAAF's objectives and activities,*
 - *influences to a certain extent, the prerequisite conditions for achieving the SDG or reducing negative impact.*

CAAF is committed to working in close cooperation with stakeholders to support SDG targets and contributing to make the world a better place for all.

SDGs APPLICABLE TO CAAF ACTIVITY

UN SDG	CAAF alignment
1 No Poverty	Through safe and efficient aviation oversight, CAAF supports economic growth by enabling trade, tourism, and investment—contributing to poverty reduction in Fiji.
2 No Hunger	Through rigorous oversight of air transport safety and security, CAAF enables the timely delivery and export of food and agricultural products—strengthening food security in Fiji and supporting the global fight against hunger.
3 Good Health and Well Being	CAAF ensures safe and efficient medical transport and is advancing RPAS standards for remote deliveries, while also supporting pandemic preparedness through the development of Fiji's National Aviation Plan, safeguarding public health at the border
4 Quality Education	CAAF supports quality education and skills development by enabling access to learning through safe air transport, regulating aviation training institutes, facilitating specialised courses, and hosting workplace attachments that build technical and vocational capacity for decent work and employment.

SDGs APPLICABLE TO CAAF ACTIVITY

UN SDG	CAAF alignment
5 Gender Equality	CAAF promotes gender equality through inclusive recruitment, policy reforms, and awareness initiatives, empowering women in aviation and achieving gender parity across leadership and technical roles. Appointed its first female CE and has a gender balance in executive management (50/50).
6 Clean water and sanitation	Through its oversight of aviation infrastructure, CAAF supports access to clean water and sanitation at aerodromes and related facilities, aligning with national efforts to improve public health and environmental standards.
7 Affordable and Clean Energy	CAAF advances clean and efficient energy use in aviation by facilitating sustainable aviation fuels, promoting performance-based navigation, and supporting the adoption of energy-efficient technologies like solar at airports
8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	By enabling safe and efficient air transport and regulating aviation training and services, CAAF drives industry growth, supports tourism and trade, and contributes to the creation of quality jobs across Fiji.

SDGs APPLICABLE TO CAAF ACTIVITY

UN SDG		CAAF alignment
9	Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	CAAF fosters innovation and resilient infrastructure by enabling RPAS/drones technologies, enhancing aviation security systems, and adopting cloud-based operations to improve oversight and efficiency
10	Reduced Inequality	By enabling safe air connectivity to remote and underserved areas through certified aerodromes, heliports, and water landing sites, CAAF helps reduce inequalities in access to essential services and opportunities
11	Sustainable Cities and communities	CAAF is contributing to urban mobility and resilience by ensuring efficient air transport systems and certifying aviation infrastructure and making input to rule development in the region that supports emergency response and sustainable city development.
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	CAAF promotes resource efficiency through digitalisation of records, inspections, and publications—reducing paper use, minimising waste, and supporting more sustainable aviation operations.

SDGs APPLICABLE TO CAAF ACTIVITY

UN SDG	CAAF alignment
13 Climate action	CAAF supports climate action by enabling sustainable aviation fuels, promoting performance-based navigation, and contributing to Fiji's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aviation.
14 Life below water	CAAF supports national efforts to protect marine ecosystems by regulating seaplane operations and promoting environmental oversight near coastal aerodromes, contributing to the preservation of life below water
15 Life on Land	CAAF supports biodiversity protection through the promotion of sustainable aviation fuels, performance-based navigation, and environmental initiatives that mitigate aviation's impact on terrestrial ecosystems.
16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	CAAF strengthens institutional governance and the rule of law through the ongoing review of Fiji's Civil Aviation Acts and its collaboration with national and international partners to establish the Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) framework—enhancing aviation safety, security, and national resilience.

SDGs APPLICABLE TO CAAF ACTIVITY

UN SDG	CAAF alignment
17 Partnerships for the Goals	<p>CAAF advances sustainable development through strong partnerships with ICAO and regional stakeholders, actively contributing to global aviation standards and collaborative initiatives.</p> <p>CAAF actively participates in the various ICAO working groups and implementation task force groups to progress this.</p>



Through these contributions, CAAF is working towards advancing the SDGs, promoting sustainable development and ensuring that aviation serves as a catalyst for economic and social progress.

04

CHALLENGES

- EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

- ABILITY TO ADDRESS:

- CE-1 (LEGISLATION)
 - CE-2 (SPECIFIC OPERATING REGULATIONS)
 - CE-3 (ORGANISATION)
 - AIG

- AVIATION TREATIES

- NATIONAL COMMITTEES

SUCCESSSES

- Appointment of the New CAAF Board
- Appointment of CAAF first female CE
- Approval of the Job Evaluation Exercise, salary adjustments and increases
- ISO 9001: 2015 re-certification audit
- Establishment of ICAO PSIDS Liaison Office
- Nil findings for CAAF Audited Financial Statements for 2023 (3 years in a row)
- Comprehensive review of CAAF's organisation structure
- Review of aviation legislations to ensure they are fit for purpose
- USAP - CMA Audit - Nil Significant Security Concerns
- Hosting International Training Courses with ICAO and Singapore Aviation Academy

CHALLENGES

- Ability to address CE1 and CE2 and CE3 (Funding - Availability and costs associated with maintaining competencies of inspectors/staff)
- Ratification of aviation treaties pending
- Mobilisation of the National Committees; Wildlife, Facilitation, Aviation Security
- Recruitment and selection of aviation personnel
- CAAF inability to match remuneration offers from industry/external parties (retention policy)
- Digitization and Digitalization budget constraints

05

FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Civil Aviation Master Plan
- USOAP Audit Tentative 2026
- State Safety Programme and National Aviation Safety Plan
- Review of Aviation Security and Facilitation Programmes
- Constantly looking ahead
- Digitisation and Digitalisation
- Partnerships
- Explore alternative sources of funding

FUTURE OUTLOOK

- Civil Aviation Master Plan (CAMP) – holistic/all encompassing and provide Government's direction. Sub-plans to dovetail into this.
- Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) Audit Tentative 2026 – preparation and readiness
- State Safety Programme(SSP) and National Aviation Safety Plan(NASP)
- Review of Aviation Security and Facilitation Programmes to make it more relevant to our changing times
- Constantly looking ahead so we are ahead of industry and able to guide rather than trying to catchup once industry is implementing
- Extend partnerships and network
- Digitalization and Digitization

SUMMARY

- CAAF managed to successfully implement its mandate and maintain safety and security of aviation
- Continuous improvement – legislations, policies, processes and procedures
- Robust risk management - state safety risks and the organisation
- Collaboration with stakeholders
- Corporate social responsibilities

DISCUSSION SESSION -QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS





VINAKA

caaf.org.fj

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs
and Defence Public Consultation and
Site Visitation to the Civil Aviation
Authority of Fiji, Nadi

—

8 April 2025

Images Taken During the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Public Consultation and Site Visitation to the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji, Nadi on Tuesday 08 April 2025.

As part of the review of the CAAF 2023 Annual Report, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence conducted public consultations and site visitations, which included direct engagement with Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) officials. These interactions provided the Committee with a clearer understanding of CAAF's regulatory functions, safety oversight responsibilities, and operational challenges. The presence and input of CAAF officials during these sessions were instrumental in clarifying technical aspects of the report, and highlighting ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening Fiji's civil aviation sector.



