

5th May 2016.

Dear Mr Cameron,

The St Helena Government issued a vague press release last week explaining that the airport opening was delayed for an unspecified time. This followed the first flight by Comair in which the Captain performed a "go around" from a low altitude before returning for a second landing attempt. The reason given is "windshear", which was totally predictable at the planning stage. I wrote to you on the 2nd of August 2010 and I enclose a copy of my letter, you will note in paragraph 3 that I specifically stated that wind would be a problem. However my well intentioned advice was ignored, and £350 million has now been spent on an airport which is probably operationally unusable.

Windshear is a meteorological phenomenon found throughout the world, it happens at UK airports regularly, but it does not shut the airports down. Nor should it prevent a new airport from opening unless there is an additional serious problem involved. I strongly suspect that this extra problem is being caused by the aircraft's Ground Proximity Warning System, always known as GPWS. This is mandatory equipment in all commercial aircraft, and on receipt of a safety warning the Captain MUST perform a "go around", which means applying full power and climbing away as steeply as possible before considering a second approach. The Captain has no discretion in ignoring the warning.

This equipment can give warnings in 7 different modes, but only 2 concern us. These are mode 2 (excessive rate of terrain closure), or mode7 (windshear). If my theory is correct the Captain received a GPWS warning in the final stages of the approach which could have been caused by either of the above 2 modes, or possibly both simultaneously.

At about the same time as I previously wrote to you, I contacted The Air Access Coordinator at Government House In St Helena predicting that the proposed airport would present problems from the GPWS system. I hope this message is still on file as I have deleted them from my computer years ago. The lady in charge replied to me

explaining that she was not technically qualified and gave me an email address at W S Atkins, the airport consultants.

I duly emailed them, 3 times eventually, predicting a mode 2 GPWS warning on every approach but my advice was ignored. I do hope my emails have been retained by the consultants as they have a bit of explaining to do regarding the delayed opening.

The reason why these warnings present such a problem is because second or subsequent approaches following a warning must be in visual conditions. If the warning is repeated on this second approach, the Captain is permitted to ignore the warning and land, providing he has the runway clearly in view. If the Captain is flying in cloud when a warning occurs on second or subsequent approaches a "go around" is mandatory. So the airport becomes unusable in cloudy or foggy conditions, which are all too common even in Summer at the airport site. As the planned airline route is from Johannesburg 2000 miles away, no airline will operate if there is a probability of being unable to land. The nearest diversion airfield is Ascension Island 700 miles away, and where there is no hotel accommodation, a very unattractive situation for an airline. In my previous letter paragraph 5 regarding "Island Holding" is now of the utmost importance.

The airfield safety issues will be dealt with by Air Safety Standards International, a division of the Civil Aviation Authority. The reason ASSI exists is that the CAA were responsible for a safety lapse in a Caribbean Island several years ago, and ASSI were set up to give more attention to safety matters in far flung places. So they will take safety matters on a different Island very seriously, and will not license the airfield if there are any doubts about the final stages of the approach. I am sure they will be taking a keen interest in the flight data recorder from the Comair proving flight, this will show if my predictions were correct.

I feel very frustrated that my predictions of 6 years ago were ignored.

I look forward to hearing back from you in due course,

Kind Regards

Brian Heywood.