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AIR CARGO SECURITY – BY RCH GARBETT

Aviation safety is not an absolute. It is not the quest for zero defect. It is zero defect (with acknowledgement to Professor Johann Coetzee)

The compliance with air cargo security Regulations were made mandatory by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) some years ago. It is of great concern that the formal introduction of these Regulations in South Africa has been such an uphill battle. This is not exclusively the fault of the SACAA (although the overall responsibility lies with them), who are working under great difficulty including that they have lost two key personnel who were deeply involved with these Regulations and Technical Standards. What is also pulling on the reins that prevent a gallop forward is a degree of cynicism surrounding Part 108 that has, with some justification, invaded the air cargo industry.

The two pace forward, three pace back experience with Part 108 over several years has contributed to the apathy that now exists in certain quarters which has the net effect of creating a wait and see mindset, rather than a pro-active approach.

The initial deadline for implementation of 1st February 2009, announced by the Minister of Transport, and gazetted, for full implementation of all aspects of the Regulations, has been put back to 1st July 2009 and will not be extended further.

The essence of the Regulations is that cargo from a known, and validated, source (consignors) passing through known and validated agents, and certified as such, may be accepted by air carriers as Known Cargo which then requires no further security, apart from random checks. If your client's cargo does not qualify as Known Cargo, or you do not become Regulated, delays and risk of repudiated liability claims, in the event of an incident, will be the consequence.

The Regulations cover international, regional and domestic air cargo.

The SACAA Technical Standards, together with the Regulations, forms the foundation upon which the security procedures, measures and training may be formulated and introduced.

Care should be exercised that advice and guidance covering security should only be accepted from qualified, registered security personnel employed by Security Service Providers.

It is vital to appreciate that it is the integrated process from consignor to aircraft that is the security conduit, merely applying part of the procedure, or choosing to tender Unknown Cargo to the Air Carrier, is a circumvention of the *raison d'etre* of the Regulations as well as the responsibility obligation that exits with all of us to play our part.

There are a variety of essential items yet to be finalised by the SACAA, which is being addressed by the SACAA Industry Liaison Forum sub committee (SAAFF and other industry bodies serve on this sub committee).

The "roll out" goals announced by the CAA in May 2008 have not been met. The current CAA implementation plan is not yet achieving its objectives, however, the implementation date of 1st July is immovable.

The Part 108 measures require total commitment from all concerned – exporters, forwarding and courier agents, air carriers and suppliers of catering and all other items that are carried on aircraft.

Zero defect in the application of these cargo security measures must be the standard. Compromise or complacency must not be tolerated. The lives of innocent people could well depend on the decisions made by you.