

Media Statement

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TO : All Media

ATTENTION: News Editors / Transport Reporters / All Reporters

For immediate use

Minister Creecy Provides Progress Report on ATNS Overhaul.

PRETORIA: The Minister of Transport, Ms. Barbara Creecy has provided an update report on progress made by the Ministerial Intervention Team (MIT) to stabilize and rebuild the Air Traffic Navigation Services entity of the Department.

On 12 December 2024, Creecy established a committee of aviation experts to investigate the root cause of problems that have beset the Air Traffic and Navigation Services (ATNS) in recent times regarding flight instrument procedures that have been the source of flight delays at various airports.

The committee concluded its diagnostic report on the 30th of January 2025, with the following diagnostic findings related to safety and service delivery:

- 1) Critical staffing shortages particularly Air Traffic Services.
- 2) Critical Communication, Navigation and Surveillance (CNS) systems are not as reliable as they should be.
- 3) Flight procedures suspended as a result of not being maintained.
- 4) There are gaps in safety governance and practices

UPDATE REPORT

The committee of experts was tasked to support the ATNS Board and management to implement the recommendations of the diagnostic report in the following four categories where progress has been made;

1. Accelerated recruitment of critical staff.

The training pipeline is in the process of being re-established. Currently there is ongoing recruitment of air traffic controllers to both the ATNS and the Aviation Training Academy.

2. Upgrade of communication, navigation and surveillance (CNS) systems.

The upgrade is already underway focusing on communication, navigation and surveillance (CNS) systems.

Original Equipment Manufacturers have been engaged and procurement processes are underway to upgrade the national air traffic management system, arrivals manager, and the air traffic flow management system. Progress has also been made with datalink implementation to support ground-to-air communication.

3. Maintenance of instrument flight procedures.

The current alternative means of compliance (AMOC) at key airports will expire in early April 2025. ATNS was required to maintain these procedures and ensure that they are flight ready before this expiry date. These procedures are crucial for efficient airport access in all weather conditions.

It is unlikely that these flight procedures will be flight ready before April 2025. Consequently, urgent steps are being taken to prioritise procedures for minimal impact at major airports such as O.R. Tambo International, Cape Town International, King Shaka International, Chief Dawid Stuurman International and George airports.

Focus will be on accelerating contracts with international flight procedure designers and charting specialists. Other airports may face access impacts during poor visibility or bad weather. These procedures will be maintained after completing work at the key airports with domestic and international scheduled operations.

4. Prioritise and improve governance processes for safety accountability.

The independence of safety oversight is being re-established across the company. Safety audit findings and recommendations are being addressed and closed out. The safety governance structures have also been established, and have started with work.

MANAGEMENT CHANGES

The Minister has also issued a ministerial order for the Board of Air Traffic Navigation Services (ATNS) to place the Chief Executive Officer of ATNS, Ms. Nosipho Mdawe, on precautionary suspension.

She further ordered the Board of ATNS to appoint an independent law firm to investigate the conduct of the Chief Executive Officer concerning the fulfilment of her duties and responsibilities as a Chief Executive Officer of ATNS.

This Ministerial order is issued in accordance with section 10(1) of the Air Traffic and Navigation Services Company Act 45 of 1993.

The Board will appoint the ATNS Chief Financial Officer, Mr Matome Moholola, as an acting Chief Executive Officer.

Ms. Mdawe will remain on suspension pending the finalisation of the investigation and its outcomes.

CREECY'S REACTION

In her reaction to the progress report, Creecy stated that "As the Shareholder Minister of the ATNS, I appointed a committee of experts to investigate the state of affairs of the ATNS and the status of air traffic navigation services in South Africa. The experts' findings, which have been shared with the ATNS Board of Directors, reveal several grave and material issues within the ATNS and the country's air traffic navigation services."

However, since the commencement of this investigation, a number of other urgent interventions have been identified as critical for ATNS's continued operations and we are beginning to notice progress."

On the ministerial order, Creecy concluded by reiterating that, "I consider this ministerial order necessary to facilitate the discharge of South Africa's international obligations under the Convention on International Civil Aviation ("Chicago Convention")."

In terms of Section 10(4) of the Act, the ATNS, represented by the Board of Directors, shall take all necessary steps to give effect to this order."

ISSUED BY: National Department of Transport

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