

## **Fresh Air Matters... with Capt. Yaw**

Can you believe that we are already in July! Can you believe the weather! Can you believe that the foundation stone of many pilots training and thousands of corporate aircraft solutions, Cessna, has laid off about half of its workers (that is about 8,000 people losing their jobs) and is giving the rest an 'un-paid furlough' of three or four weeks. 2009 is half-way through and the economic and meteorological impacts are high. We all hope that the next half brings better news for the economy, the weather and, of course, for aviation!

It is amazing to most of us that both United and American Airlines are managing multi-million dollar debt restructuring in order to maintain their fleets, qualified staff and operations – and that between them the numbers talked about are much higher than the \$535 million package approved last week from the World Bank to help the whole nation of Ghana – which also puts things about our economic situation into perspective!

If we look at Ghanaian aviation activities we do not have the same stories as across the pond! Our light aviation sector is recruiting and will expand its employment in production over 100% in the second half of this year. Our domestic airlines are hoping to increase in number, our routes growing, the number of people travelling by air is on the way up. Many of our medium sized and larger corporate operations are considering purchasing aircraft for the first time! The first corporate aviation centre is being built. Things may be tough in Ghana, but things are looking up!

Although we have this growth, we still see a lack of our Ghanaian nationals at the controls of aircraft and in the engineering departments. Training a pilot or engineer takes time and money. Look at the aviation growth in Takoradi with the Helicopter traffic to and from the oil rigs - we can see potential for more Ghanaian registered machines and crews and opportunities for those with pockets deep enough for the equipment and training to enter that market.

Elsewhere, we can expect to see growth of existing air operations and the introduction of more domestic and regional airlines ready to blossom in the 'new oil-fed economy' of Ghana in the coming months and years. At the entry end of the air transport industry, single engine air-taxi legislation is needed to allow more immediate access to rural areas and the developing network of community airfields. Furthermore, we should see some interesting bigger and newer machines flying – there are some really nice planes that could serve our region well just waiting for the right operator to start their use. Perhaps with all of this our businesses will increase their use of the domestic and regional operators to move people, parts and products around the country for convenience and in time critical applications.

All of this is exciting, but will it create more ex-pat jobs or more Ghanaian jobs? It will create jobs for those who are qualified – and recent years have not seen many Ghanaians gaining those qualifications nor any visible and determined effort to encourage Ghanaians into the industry, with the exception of our Ghana Air Force who have led so many into the industry over the past 50 years and fed civilian operations with staff as they leave the force. Remember the valiant efforts of Airlink with its fleet of

Fokker 27's? It was a pioneer in making air travel more 'people friendly' in Ghana and today's operators may not realise the debt they owe such pioneers. Airlink was able to benefit from the Air Force resources, especially in relation to pilots and engineers.

Now is the time to consider where civilian operations will get pilots, air traffic controllers and engineers, and also to ask where other trained staff for day-to-day operations in all sectors of the economy are coming from. If we want to encourage the air operators to provide training that runs to many tens of thousands of dollars, we should first make sure that we are providing recruitment and training opportunities to others in our own sectors – and remember that just because a candidate is not well educated it does not mean that they are not intelligent or trainable, and just because you see a well educated candidate it does not mean that they are intelligent or trainable!!

In Ghana we so blessed, in that we have a developing or 'take-off' economy and so our story is not quite so bleak as the developed, or 'down-turning' world that we considered at the beginning of this column! Like most of our African economies we can really only go up – there is little room for down (and down is very visible, readily remembered and we all want to avoid it!). However, America and Europe is at the other end of the scale, little room to go up, but lots of room to go down – with little recent memory of what down is *really* like! Ghana is already gaining thousands of feet along the climb-out phase of its economic growth, and with it she has the increased vision of a little altitude, but it must keep its economy and personnel on the climb, to get to a safe altitude! Thankfully, many of those at the higher flight levels of economic growth see our efforts and are encouraging and supporting our climb path, but it is more limited recently since they have their own problems too! Others are encouraged by our developments and are hot on our heels trying to out-climb us!

It is important at this juncture of our aviation and business developments to promote training, promote growth, remain positive and realise that we have much more potential to grow than the USA or Europe. As my mother use to say 'God helps those who helps themselves' – so we must stop complaining and waiting for 'solutions on a platter' and help ourselves to better training, better equipment and better use of our available resources – not only in aviation but in all aspects of our growing 'climbing' economy!

Have a great week helping yourself and others to help themselves and keep on looking at those skies – they are full of promise – so reach out and reach up!

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