



The Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers

20th December 2018

Gatwick Airport Closure due to Drone Activity

GATCO condemns the irresponsible and criminal actions taken by those flying drones over Gatwick Airport last night and today, and supports the decision to suspend aircraft operations to preserve the safety of aircraft, their crews and the public. The level of disruption experienced is unprecedented and such an event will continue to be a threat until appropriate measures are taken.

Our calls for stricter regulations and enforcement have been repeatedly dismissed by regulatory bodies. That have led us and BALPA, the British Airline Pilots' Association, to provide guidelines for both air traffic controllers and pilots to handle a drone sighting event as safely as possible.

In addition, GATCO has been advocating for geofencing and other counterdrone measures to be implemented to combat the threat posed by unlawful drone users. Unfortunately, business interests have had a higher priority than regulations and enforcement supported by appropriate technology. While GATCO recognises the many benefits drone technology can bring to our society, safety must remain the top priority.

GATCO will continue to work closely with regulators, industry, standardisation organisations and other stakeholders to ensure drones are integrated safely in our airspace and appropriate measures are implemented to protect our industry and the public from unlawful drone use.

Note to Editors:

GATCO is a UK-wide organisation which promotes the highest standards in all aspects of ATM and is dedicated to the safety of all who travel or gain their livelihood in the air, with its 1,600 membership drawn from both civilian and military air traffic controllers. GATCO is actively involved in the work of the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA), the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the Single European Sky (SES), in addition to collaborating with the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and other UK-based aviation organisations.