



The Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers

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GATCO Condemns Swiss Air Traffic Controller Prosecution

Swiss prosecutors have struck a blow at the very foundation of the aviation safety system, built up over decades, by bringing a prosecution against an air traffic controller who reported a safety incident, says the United Kingdom's Guild of Air Traffic Control Officers (GATCO).

The key element of the aviation industry's safety reporting procedures is trust. The ability of controller to work in a 'just culture' environment where incidents and even mistakes can be freely reported without fear of punishment or reprimand is paramount to maintaining and improving the safety system.

The decision of the Swiss prosecutors to charge an air traffic controller with criminal intent is both contrary to the principles of just culture and inconsistent with European regulations. What makes the prosecution even more damaging is the incident, which resulted in no fatalities and no damage to aircraft nor infrastructure, was reported in 2011, meaning the controller has been facing prosecution for over seven years.

GATCO joins other European organisations in calling for changes in the way Swiss authorities, including State prosecutors, view such incidents and to remove the fear of punishment and prosecutions. The approach taken by Swiss authorities undoubtedly has a negative effect on air traffic control professionals carrying out their safety critical jobs and is detrimental to the overall safety system that protects the travelling public.

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.