



How Thailand came out of the shadows of ICAO

In 2015, the Kingdom of Thailand was issued a Significant Safety Concern (SSC) by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) over the inadequate safety oversight of its registered international carriers. ICAO identified 572 findings related to the ICAO Protocol Questions (PQs). 33 of these findings were directly related to the SSC. Afterwards, the US aviation regulator, the Federal Aviation Agency, downgraded Thailand to Category II status, restricting any Thai carriers from flying into the United States. More countries followed suit, adding further restrictions flying into Japan, South Korea and China.

With over 20% of GDP depending on travel and tourism (expected to rise to 31.7% of GDP by 2027), it was crucial for Thailand to address the international safety concerns and improve the existing safety oversight, to enhance Thailand's aviation reputation.

With determination to reverse the status, in 2016 The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) appointed CAA International (CAAI) to help strengthen CAAT's aviation safety oversight and compliance with ICAO. CAAT requested assistance with recertification of the registered international air operators and help with preparation for a future ICAO audit.

Challenges

In May 2016, the CAAI technical team visited CAAT for an initial project briefing. Both teams worked together to identify inadequate procedures and processes, and fragmented regulations with gaps against ICAO Annexes. CAAT was aware that by not having suitable regulations in place, any recertification work to ICAO standards could have been rendered invalid.

Country Profile



Name of the country:
Kingdom of Thailand

Size of the country:
513,120 km²

Population:
68,860,000

Number of international airports: 11

Number of international carriers: 20

Number of international flights in 2016: 402,721¹

Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in 2016: 20.6%²

Number of passengers travelled to and from UK airports to Thailand in 2016: 790,149

In addition, CAAT recognised it had an insufficient number of qualified inspectors and other technical resources to tackle this issue, which needed addressing prior to proceeding with aircraft operations recertification. The low number of suitable staff would have meant that CAAT could not adequately perform the recertification programme, which would have hindered their overall sustainability.

Our Solution

Working with CAAT, CAAi started by drafting new procedures and checklists, addressing the regulation gaps in the areas of operations, cabin safety, dangerous goods and airworthiness. CAAi then identified a sufficient number of suitably qualified inspectors who would work alongside CAAi's technical experts during the inspections, to provide on-the-job training for them, in turn ensuring future sustainability for CAAT.

Another challenge CAAi faced was the management of the AOC oversight. CAAi introduced an IT solution called Centrik to support this process and the recertification work. This meant the project team could put all the checklists on the Centrik system, record the compliances and non-compliances from the inspections, and in turn raise and track the appropriate findings.

“CAAi has played a very big part in our success from the very beginning. The system they suggested for the recertification process and their assistance in its implementation paved the ways for our completion of the actions to resolve the significant safety concern, leading to the lifting of the red flag.”

Dr. Chula Sukmanop,
Director General of CAA Thailand

Once the solid foundations for the recertification were in place, CAAi began the recertification programme with CAAT. Each AOC would undergo a document inspection, an onsite inspection and a flight inspection. Many of the AOC's documents were not initially compliant with ICAO regulations. Consequently, CAAi had to deploy extra resources liaising with CAAT and the operators to resolve the issues.

Prior to the ICAO ICVM audit where ICAO would assess CAAT's progress on the corrective actions, CAAi supported CAAT on their responses to the PQs that ICAO required to be satisfactorily addressed before the ICVM audit.

Outcomes and benefits for Thailand and CAAT

In September 2017, ICAO conducted an ICAO Coordinated Validation Mission (ICVM) audit on Thailand which determined that sufficient progress had been made to remove the Significant Safety Concern (also known as "red flag"). Removing this red flag has given Thai registered airlines the opportunity to continue operating international routes and expand their network into other regions. This was an enormous achievement, considering that the Thai economy heavily relies on the income from travel and tourism.

In successfully addressing the protocol questions for the ICVM, Thailand's effective implementation for operations increased from 10.22% to 38.69%. In the area of airworthiness, effective implementation was raised from 61.98% to 76.03%.

By October 2017, CAAi helped CAAT recertify eleven carriers, and is continuing to assist in the recertification of the remaining nine carriers.

¹ <http://aot.listedcompany.com/transport.html>

² www.vttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2017/thailand2017.pdf



Key Achievements

- Effective implementation for operations increased from **10.22% to 38.69%**
- Airworthiness, effective implementation raised from **61.98% to 76.03%**
- ICAO removed the Significant Safety Concern (also known as "Red Flag")
- Eleven carriers recertified; MJets, K-Mile, Thai Smile, Thai Lion Air, Nok Air, Bangkok Airways, Air Asia, Thai Airways, AirAsia X, New Gen Airways and Thai AirAsia

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