

## **SMS Perspectives from the FSF International Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting at IASS 2008**

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### **Introduction**

David Mawdsley represented the Superstructure Group on the International Advisory Committee (IAC) which took place on 27 October 2008 immediately preceding the IASS. David took a particular interest in the SMS aspects both at the IAC and the seminar as a whole and here he identifies some highlights which he sees as being relevant to SMS implementers.

### **SMS Implementation - Concerns**

From a SMS perspective there are two aspects of concern to the IAC. Firstly, it is worrying that the highly successful government/industry partnership in safety, which has produced remarkable results, appears to be at risk. SMS implementers have been accused of fostering a “cosy” relationship between regulator and service providers in Canada, the US and Australia. In some government circles and in parts of the media SMS is being seen as a form of deregulation and a means of avoiding accountability. Such perceptions were likely to be exacerbated by the global financial crisis warned Bill Voss, President of the Flight Safety Foundation. “It’s tough to sell SMS when airlines are failing but SMS is something we can’t afford not to do” he said.

Secondly, there is concern that the industry is not adequately measuring the performance of the SMS against clear metrics and agreed levels of safety. A performance based system is the mark of a mature SMS. As an example of safety performance measurement Captain David Chapman, Group Director Safety Regulation for the UK CAA, cited his Group’s recently published Global Fatal Accident Review (CAP 776) which summarises a study of worldwide fatal accidents over the past decade. According to the Review the most frequently identified primary causal factor was “Omission of action/inappropriate action”. This generally related to flight crew continuing their descent below the decision height or minimum descent/safety heights without visual reference, failing to fly a missed approach, or omitting to set the correct aircraft configuration for take-off.

### **Safety Reporting and Culture**

Bill Voss pointed to Loss of Control and Controlled Flight Into Terrain accidents as the “killers” and questioned what was happening to some of the lessons learned from accidents and incidents. He felt that global information dissemination had not yet been achieved (e.g. ATR 42/72 icing incidents). Bill added that the economic climate has led to difficult labour relationships and lack of trust which were already impeding the effectiveness of some voluntary disclosure reporting systems in the United States.

In his presentation Jim Burin, FSF’s Director of Technical Programs, focussed on the challenge of measuring a positive safety culture. He mentioned that several organizations today, particularly the military (US Navy), were measuring their safety culture – or their safety climate. Climate is an important indicator of the underlying safety culture and refers to the perception of the members of the organization that their leaders are committed to safety. Many organizations not only measure their safety culture or climate, but they can compare their organization’s safety culture with similar organizations. Even better – they can provide recommendations on how to improve any weak areas identified in their safety culture.

### **“The Data Will Set You Free”**

Giving the keynote address to the seminar Nick Sabatini, shortly to retire as associate administrator for aviation safety of the FAA, advocated the “integrated” SMS approach across the organization. Citing ASIAs – the Government-Industry Collaboration on Aviation Safety Data Analysis and Sharing – Nick projected that it was the use of data that would “take us to the next level of aviation safety”. He went on to say, “The data will set you free, moving us from forensics to prevention and to a more complete understanding of the threat”.

### **The Way Forward**

On a positive note both Bill Voss and Curt Graeber (Industry Safety Strategy Group and Boeing) applauded the success of the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap (GASR) which was now being implemented in Africa, South America and the Middle East. Curt reported to the seminar “success beyond all of our expectations in this first year of implementation”. As Director Safety with IATA David played a leading role in the GASR initiative, which has now become the ICAO Global Plan. The Superstructure Group is committed to the GASR integrated approach to SMS and to the sharing of information in a generative safety reporting culture.