

CONTROL LAPSES IN THE NIGERIAN AVIATION INDUSTRY: EVIDENCE FROM BELLVIEW STAFF AND PASSENGERS

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Abstract

Recent air crashes in Nigerian airspace have sensitized Nigerians about the inadequacies in the aviation industry. What are these lapses and how can they be contained?. This study attempts to answer these questions using Bellview Airline staff and passengers as respondents. We found that the problems are not intractable. The aviation ministry in Nigeria has to look inwards for the solutions.

When accidents occur on our highways, the causes are often identified as either the fault of the drivers, the problem with the vehicles, or the state of the roads. Not much of public attention is drawn to such accidents probably because the lives affected are limited in number per accident or because low income, less known personalities travel by road.

It is a different issue when air crashes occur. Air accidents are attributed firstly to the inefficiency of the air traffic controllers and only secondly to the airworthiness of the aircrafts. In this study, we will look at the two issues critically and empirically.

The Problem

Nigerian Aviation industry has been rated as the most unsafe in the world. The Bellview crash and the Sosoliso crash were viewed by the public as quite avoidable . Gandi (2005) indicated that everything in our airports is dead. He also noted that due to government attitude to its policies, airlines appear to be virtually on their own in implementing maintenance and safety standards. Kyari (2005) indicated that where the owner of an airline is “all in all”, there is bound to be lapses. He pointed out that in Nigeria, there is no maintenance base, the consequence of which is the absence of yardsticks for measuring the maintenance works carried out by airlines on their aircrafts.

The Research Focus

This work is designed to

- identify the control lapses in the Nation’s aviation industry.
- explore the link between aviation control lapses and the Bellview 2005 air crash.
- proffer solutions to the problem.

The Aviation Industry in Nigeria

Nigeria has a robust Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA)with USA by which air services were provided for Nigeria Airways and Pan American Airlines (later American Trans Air) Experts from the American Federal Aviation Administration (FAAA) , the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the US embassy in Lagos collaborated to enhance the use of screening

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machines, colour-coded identity and on-duty cards, restriction of movement into security areas; perimeter fencing, and monitoring of airport services in Nigeria airports

In 2000, the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) was created to address safety oversight and Civil aviation matters. In 2001 the Federal Aviation Authority(FAA) determined the status of Nigeria in its International Aviation Safety Assessments (IASA) program.

Also the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) flight operations safety inspectors received training at the Federal Aviation Authority Academy in Oklahoma. Nigeria has revived and upgraded the Nigeria Civil Air Navigation Regulations. Nigeria has in place the Nigeria Civil Aviation Act, the Aviation Safety Inspectors Handbook, and the Nigeria Civil Aviation Requirements. In 2001, Nigeria launched the NCAA Consumer Protection Programme to enhance air travellers' confidence in the system and facilitate redress of complaints. Nigeria has an Open Skies Agreement with the United States which is intended to remove all obstacles and restrictions on airline operations between the two countries.(internet sources-see references).

There is the Yamoussoukro Declaration and the Banjul Decision aimed at liberalization of Air services and integration of African airspace. There is a ban in Nigeria of the operation of aircrafts whose age is over 22 years Nigerian pilots have been accused of “ putting their eyes on money rather than standards”, thus compromising on air safety through extended work sheet schedules (Kyari, 2005).

On training, Nigerian regulatory authorities are reportedly complacent on enforcing the rule. The current training rating in the industry is just about 20%. Most airlines fail to train their personnel, preferring rather to poach personnel from other airlines.

The airlines in Nigeria use the 125.5 transmitter beacons because staff of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) have no idea of aviation. There is no specialized Search-and- Rescue Unit in the country. The total Radar coverage of the Nigeria airspace has not been actualized. The navigational facilities have not been upgraded Nigeria subscribes to the Universal Safety Audit Regulatory Framework (USARF) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Aligbe, (2010) has given us a current insight into developments in the nation's aviation industry as summarized below:

Nigeria's aviation industry has stabilized in the area of safety and safe regulations, due to the efforts of the Dr. Demuren led Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA). There has not been any accident or major incident in the industry for quite a few years now standards policing has significantly improved confidence on the industry.

In recent times, several -strides have been made to make Nigerian airspace very much safer than it has ever been.

The success seen in NCAA is being re-enacted in the Nigeria Airspace Management Agency /(NAMA) where Alhaji Ibrahim Auyo, one of Nigeria's best airspace management professionals, is

the Chief Executive Officer. Auyo, with a crop of young active management team, has pushed through the long awaited Total Radar Coverage (TRACON) of the country's airspace.

Lagos and Abuja became functional in August and September 2009 respectively. By the end of 2009, Port-Harcourt, Obubra and Talata—Mafara will come on—stream and Kano, by the end of January 21)10. The remaining ones under the TRACON project, Maiduguri, Numan and Ilorin already have their civil works completed and will all come on-stream by the end of first quarter, 2011 which will be followed with Global Optimization of the nine sites and commissioning at the end of that period.

Presently, there are other ongoing airspace management and safety—enhancement projects whose contracts have been awarded or approved.

World Geodetic Survey – 84 (WGS – 84). which involves the survey of all airports in the country as well as all air route is in the pipeline. This survey is to prepare the country for satellite-based airspace management and operations which is the newest technology.

Contract has also been awarded for Total VHF coverage of the country. This will enable air traffic controllers talk to any aircraft entering the Nigerian airspace. This enhances safety, security and efficient management even from the economic point of view. In fact, not many people know that some dubious operators tend to over-fly airspaces without paying over-flight charges by avoiding detection.

In addition, contract has been approved for the automation of Aeronautical Information Service (AIS). When this is completed by 2011, all aeronautical information can be gathered, stored and delivered easily on modern technology platforms rather than the manual procedure presently in use with its attendant inadequacies.

Remarkable also is the fact that the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), since the last two years, has stepped up its weather forecasting capabilities with the acquisition of Doppler Radar and other equipment for in-situ and real-time delivery of weather information to airlines. Today, there are thunderstorm direction equipment in place as well as weather reporting stations with capabilities for ground-to-control-tower information at all airports.

Lagos airport, the nation's main and most commercial, offers us an inexplicable scenario of pain and sadness. Apart from the privately owned MM2 which offers, for now, a temporary relief both the international terminal (MM1) and the General Aviation Terminal (GAT) may not pass any serious service test when compared to what obtains in standard airports globally, and even Africa.

For over three years now one of the two runways in Lagos, precisely the domestic runway, has not been fully functional. Since it was ream faced over one year ago, the runway lights are yet to be fixed. This has made the runway usable only for daytime operations. At night, both domestic and international flights use the international runway with resultant economic losses to airlines which are

made to hold in the air or at the threshold, for as much as an hour, before clearing to land or take off as the ease may be.

In the airline sub-sector the state of affairs is not any better. All the airlines are indebted to tunes of between N200 mithon to N2 hillion, put modestly. There is hardly any aviation parastatal (.FAAN, NAMA, NCAA, NIMET, NAHCO, SAHCO) and even Bi –Courtney (owners of MM2) and catering service companies that is not owed huge sums by Nigerian domestic airline operators.

Recently, sonic of them have had to shut down or contact out their operations. Even the most perceptibly virile of them is weak, in operational standards, services, schedule integrity and marketing. Most critically, apart from Nigerian Eagle Airline that has put in place a turn-around management, most of the airlines are still poorly managed. Most of the airlines are afflicted by the owner-manager phenomenon with its attendant poor decision making an ‘key-man risk’.

.Nigerian airlines are reporting losses; and _going deeper and deeper into debts. It even appears that the bigger an operator, the larger the debt, Available records show that Nigerian domestic airlines carried over 5.5 rmillion passengers in 2008 and posted losses, while Ethiopian Airline air-lifted[2.6 million passengers in the same period with a profit of US\$ 11.8 million from a total revenue of US\$1.18 billion.

South African Airways made a profit of US\$33.8rillion from a total revenue of USS 2.6 hillion in 2008 during which it carried over six million passengers. In 2008, while foreign airlines repatriated USS 650 milhion, Nigerian airlines altogether, made US\$75 million. Also, between June 22 and July 3, 2009, foreign airlines repatriated N4 billion in foreign exchange while Nigerian airlines kept sinking deeper into debts.

There is also the challenge that airline commercial agreements are still being handled by the ministry and political officers with insufficient knowledge of what is involved, to the detriment of the industry and the country.

Measures

The views of randomly sampled Bellview. air travelers were obtained. These travelers were found in the waiting rooms of the local airport at Ikeja-Lagos. They filled out questionnaires specifically designed for them (see appendix 1). The views of randomly sampled Bellview staff were also obtained. The staff were served with a questionnaire each which is requesting information different from the ones designed for Bellview air travelers. (see appendix 2).

In handling the assignment, the following assumptions were made:.

- The respondents will honestly fill out the questionnaire having received assurance of anonymity (absence of bias).
- The respondents’ opinions can be assessed through the instrumentality of questionnaire.
- The sampled population are capable of providing the desired information.
- The sample size is a good representation of the population of the research work.

Control Lapses in the Nigerian Aviation Industry: Evidence from Bellview Staff and Passengers

Simple percentages was used for analyzing the responses. A sample size of 60 made up of 40 passengers and 20 staffers of Bellview Airline was selected Fifty-two (52) respondents returned properly filled out copies of the questionnaire.

Information was also obtained from certain prominent personalities in the aviation industry (see appendix 3)

Data Analysis and Result

Responses By Bellview Staff

- Bellview does not buy brand new aircrafts (63 %) .
- Management of the Airline makes provision for overseas checks/maintenance of its aircrafts (100 %) and imports brand new spare parts (94 %).
- Pilots go for routine medical check-up (92%)
- Pilots are regularly exposed to training (88%) including overseas coursed (73%).

Responses By Bellview Passengers

- Relative to other airlines the services of Bellview are good (94%) including customer attention (86 %) but there are other better customer-friendly airlines (100 %) that should be preferred (77 %). Such as Aero contractors (62% and chanchangi (27%)
- The Federal government exercises inadequate control on airline operations (100%) due to corruption (100 %) . This problem can be solved by weeding out corrupt officials and closing down some airlines (77%) .
- Bellview services emphasize passenger safety (58 %) as it has well maintained aircrafts (67%); therefore irrespective of the October 2005 crash, Bellview can still be patronized (81 %).
- There are lapses in the Nigeria aviation industry (100% and these fall into safety, standards, maintenance and administrative (100%). These lapses are attributable to the Federal government and the airline operators (81%) and to the passengers (19%)
- The control lapses in the aviation industry can be curtailed by allowing the aviation ministry to introduce sound policies and enforce rigid disciplinary measures against erring airline operators (85 %)

Discussion and Conclusion

The opinions elicited from passengers and staff of Bellview Airline can be generalized. The aviation industry in Nigeria needs urgent attention. It demands patriotism, not selfishness by the actors. The Aviation ministry should wake up to its responsibilities of vetting, screening, licensing, regulating and controlling the activities of the airline operators.

As it stands, the Ministry has not done well as it has not been able to exercise control over the nefarious activities of our airline operators. The Ministry is incapacitated because corrupt officials

have not been relieved of their posts. Furthermore , ill-maintained aircrafts in the custody of some airlines should not be allowed to operate while airlines that flaunt safety standards should be shut down.

The aviation ministry should facilitate efficiency and effectiveness of performance of the aviation sector by providing rigid but credible policies. These policies have to be enforced particularly in the area of aircraft maintenance, and compliance with safety standards. Efforts should be made to educate aircraft passengers so that they can insist on the availability of required standards by airlines. The public should be protected legally to enable them expose erring airlines in areas of aircraft maintenance and breaching of safety standards. Passenger safety should not be compromised with enterprise profitability. Recently , aircraft owners have been hasty in getting their pilots to fly their air places despite the insistence of air traffic controllers that the eruption dust from the volcanoes had not cleared. They were counting their financial losses. Passenger safety did not concern them.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for Bellview Airline Passengers

1. How can you rate Bellview Services, compared other airlines in the country?
2. Do you believe that you are properly taken care of by Bellview Airline?
3. Do you believe that some airline in Nigeria take better care of their passengers than Bellview Airline?
4. Does the federal Government of Nigeria have adequate control over Airline Companies in Nigeria?
5. Does Bellview Airline care about the safety of their passengers?
6. Are Belleview aircraft well maintained?
7. Is your preference for Bellview airline not affected by the October 22 2005 plane crash at Lisa village in Ogun State?
8. Are there control lapse4s in Nigerian Aviation Industry?
9. Who are those responsible for the control lapses? (Federal Government , Airline Operators, Passengers).
10. How can you rate the effectiveness of the rescue operation of the October 22, 2005 plane crash?
11. How can the control lapses in the Aviation Industry be contained? (administrative polices, disciplinary measures against erring operators, sensitization of passengers).
12. Is the aviation industry capable of controlling the airlines operators?

Appendix 2

Questionnaire for Bellview Airline Staff

1. How long have you been working for Bellview Company?
2. Does your management procure brand new or fairly used aircrafts?
3. Does your management make provision for oversea maintenance checks in their aircrafts?
4. Are apare parts procured by your management , new or fairly- used?
5. Does your management conduct routine medical checks for their pilots?
6. Does your management make provision for the training of their pilots? (locally or overseas).

Appendix 3

Personalities Interviewed,

- 1 Bayo Badatunde – Aviation Consultant, and MD ,AVSCON Ltd.
- 2 Biodun Oladunjoye- Corporate Affairs Manager , NEMA
- 3 Effiong Effiong – ED, Nigerian Aviation Safety Initiative.(NASI)
- 4 Fidelis Onyeriri – Director – General of NCAA.
- 5 Folly Kosi – Secretary – General, African Airlines Association (AFRAA)
- 6 Kayode Odukoya - MD Bellview Airlines

- 7 Sheri Kyari-Former National President, Nigerian Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers (NAAPE)
- 8 Sule Yari Gandi –Member, Senate Committee on Aviation,

Appendix 4

Table 1: Airlines, Aircrafts and their Ages

KABO AIR	B747	B747 – 136	5N – 000	1974	500
	B747	B747 – 238B	5N – PDP	1974	500
	B747	B747 – 287B	5N – NN	1975	420
KINGS AIRLINES	HS 125	HS 125 – 600B	5N – MAY	1977	10
	HS 125	HS 125 – 700B	5N – MAO	NA	NA
	HS 125	HS 125 – 700B	5N – MAZ	1982	9
MOBIL PRODUCING	HS 125	HS 125 – 600B	5N – DOT	NA	NA
	TWIN OTTER	DHC – 6 TWIN OTTER 300	5N – MPU	1977	13
NETWORK AVIATION	PIPER	PIPER NAVAJO PA 31	5N – AEL	1978	6
PAN AFRICAN	BELL 206	BELL 206 B III	5N – BES	1980	4
	BELL 206	206 BELL L LONG RANGER	5N – AJC	1977	5
	BELL 206	BELL 206 L – 1	5N – BAS	1980	5
	BELL 206	BELL 206B III JETRANGER	5N – BAG	1979	5
	BELL 206	BELL 206B III JETRANDE	5N – BCV	1979	5
PREMIUM AIR SHUTTLE	YAK – 40	YAK – 40	5N – BOS	1973	19
	YAK – 40	YAK – 40	5N – MAR	1975	12
SOSOLISO	DC 9	DC – 9 – 81	5N – BGL	1982	142
	DC 9	DC – 9 32	5N – BFD	1973	103
SOUTHERN AIRLINES	HS 125	HS 125 – 600A	5N – EMA	1976	7
SPACEWORLD	B737	B737 - 291	5N – BGA	1981	103
	B737	B737 – 291	5N – BGA	1981	103
WINGS AVIATION	KING AIR 200	BEECHCRAFT SUPER KING AIR 200	5N – HIS	1980	10
	B1900D	BEECH 190D	5N – PTL	NA	NA

Source: Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, NCA: Feb. 2005

Appendix 5

Table 2: Some airlines and their aircrafts as at Feb. 2005

Operator	Popular Name	Aircraft Type	Reg. no.	Year of Manufacture	Max. No. of passengers
ADC	B737	B737 – 294	5N – BEE	Dec 1980	120
AERO CONTRACTORS	DAUPHIN	AS365 N	5N – ESO	1983	12
	DAUPHIN	AS365 N2	5N – BBR	1993	12
	DAUPHIN	SA 365 N DAUPHIN	5N – AQK	1983	12
	DAUPHIN	SA365 N DUAPHIN	5N – AQL	1983	12
	TWINSTAR	AS 355 F1	5N – AOA	1983	5
	TWINSTAR	AS 355 F1	5N – AOB	1983	5
	576	576C+	5N – BHF	NA	NA
AFRIJET	B727	576C+	5N – BHF	NA	NA
ALBARKA	B727	B727 – 200 ADV	5N – IMM	1973	153
	B727	B737 – 244ADV	5N – IMM	1973	
ALLIED AIR ASSOCIATED AVIATION	B727	B727 – 247	5N – OTI	1981	CARGO
	HS 125	HS 125 – 600A	5N – YET	1983	9
	HS 125	HS 125 – 700A	5N – BFC	1981	8
	HS 125	HS 125 – 700	5N – BEX	1983	8
	HS 125	HS 125 – 700A	5N – DAO	NA	NA
BELIEW	B737	B737 – 291	5N – BFX	1983	115
	B737	B737 – 2L9	5N – BFM	1981	116
	*B737	B737 – 2L9	5N – BFN	1981	116
BRISTOW HELICOPTERS	AS 332	SUPER PUMA AS 332L	5N – BGP	1983	18
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – ALU	1981	13
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – AOF	1981	13
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – AQV	1976	13
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – AXX	1976	11
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – AYX	1974	13
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – BEN	1975	11
	BELL 212	BELL 212	5N – BHE	1974	11
	BELL 412	BELL 412SP	5N – BGS	NA	11
	KING AIR	BEECHCRAFT SUPER KING AIR 200	5N – BHL	1975	8
	576	SIKORSKY S76A+	5N – SKY	1980	12
CAVERTON HELICOPTERS	A 109E	A 109E	5N – BGX	NA	NA
CHACHANGI	B727	B727 – 225	5N – BDG	1982	187
	B727	B727 – 2M7	5N – BCF	1979	103
	B727	B727 – 2M7	5N – BDF	1977	179
	B737	B737 – 217ER	5N – BEV	1982	122
CROME SERVICES	BAC1 – 11	BAC1 -11 – 525 FT	5N – UJC	1977	89
DANA	DORNIER 228	DO 228 – 100	5N – AUM	1987	15
	DORNIER 228	DO 228 – 201	5N – AUN	1986	19

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EAGLE FLYING CLUB	CESSNA	CESSNAFR 172E	5N – ASR	1986	3
EAS AIRLINES	B737	B737 – 275	5N –BHA	NA	NA
	B737	B737 – 2K9	5N –BEY	1982	109
FRSH AIR	B737	B737 – 2B7	5N –BFQ	1983	120
IRS AIRLINES	B727	B727 – 223	5N –AKR	1977	150
	F28	F28 – 4000	5N –SSZ	1982	85
JULIUS BERGER	CESSNA CONQU	CESSNA 441 CONQUES II	5N –JBN	1981	9

Source: Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, NCAA: Feb. 2005