

6-7 May

Unmanned Systems Europe 2004 International Conference
Berlin, Germany
Tel: +44 20 8652 8718
sallie.edwards@rbi.co.uk

10-12 May

AIAA Aeroacoustics Conference and Exhibitions
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www.aiaa.org

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www.iacc-expo.com

**10-16 May
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11-12 May

Shephards Electronic Warfare
London, UK
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www.shephard.co.uk

11-13 May

Airport Expo
Gdansk, Poland
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www.mtgsa.com.pl

18-19 May

2nd Annual NAFTA Transportation Conference and Exhibition
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Tel +1 816 471 2288
info@itckc.org
www.itckc.org

18-20 May

AS3 Aviation Services and Suppliers Supershow
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24-27 May

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www.simtect.com

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Embrace ATC automation

It is disappointing to see Euro-control congratulating itself on the performance of its medium-term conflict detection tool (*Flight International*, 20-26 April) when any tool of this type must have a limited part to play in the improvement of the air traffic system.

In 1989 you wrote: "The full potential of air traffic control technology will not be realised while air traffic controllers and pilots play a large part in directing the paths of aircraft through the skies" (*Flight International*, 15-21 April 1989).

In 1991 you wrote: "There will be computers with capacity and processing speed beyond any available today. The computers, knowing all aircraft flight plans, current positions, heights and speeds by interrogating the flight management system would be able to calculate the best four-dimensional conflict-free clearance for each aircraft as far ahead as possible and offer it on-screen to the controller for his approval. Having checked it, the controller could uplink it to the pilot's screen and draw his attention to it by normal VHF link" (*Flight International*, 6-12 November 1991).

Given the performance of today's computers and the research

SAFETY

Don't ignore ice lessons

Costly and dangerous airframe and engine icing incidents are happening more often than ever, yet years of accumulated knowledge seem forgotten or ignored. Flight data monitoring (FDM) – or flight operations quality assurance (FOQA) – could attack the problem.

To take one example, at Oslo Gardermoen airport in Norway in December 1998, multi-aircraft damage resulted from a lack of understanding of icing risks and procedures that could alleviate them. The investigators have yet to report, so nothing has been learned.

In freezing rain, more than 20 jet engines were damaged or destroyed. An engineer observed that the engines "looked as if they had sucked in stones". Take-offs were abandoned and five emergency landings made on one engine or because of engine vibration. Never in aviation history have so many crews (15) proven their lack of training and cold weather awareness in such a short time (2h).

In icing conditions most jet engines cannot stay ice-free at idle power, either during taxiing or airborne in the descent, so pilots need to increase power intermittently. It used to be standard, when conditions demanded, that engine anti-ice be selected on, to give the engines a run-up before take-off, but pressures to avoid delay and noise have caused this to be abandoned.

FDM should be used to detect situations when engine anti-icing is selected on, but the crew fails to increase power several times during taxi and fails to perform a run-up check before take-off and after landing.

Oluf Husted

Slagelse, Denmark

over the last 15 years, it is clear to many that an air traffic control system based on these principles is now perfectly feasible. All of the necessary components have been proven in operational trials. Such a system could eliminate almost all delays other than those due to airport capacity and could make air misses, or even an accident of the kind that occurred over Überlingen, virtually impossible.

Airlines, passengers and the European Commission all want to see improvement. The time has surely come for ATC operational groups to embrace automation for the benefit of us all.

David Parkinson

Guildford, Surrey, UK

Disabled rights

Steven Stott's letter concerning the carriage of disabled passengers (*Flight International*, 6-12 April) is, in my opinion, offensive. Any store or bar owner who refused to serve customers on the grounds of disability would surely be denying these people their basic human rights and treated accordingly.

I see no reason why disabled people should not be allowed the same access to air travel as the able-bodied enjoy, with the caveat that they are advised that, depending on the nature of their disability,

their ability to be safely evacuated from the aircraft in the event of an emergency may be compromised. As with able-bodied passengers, they should naturally be able to satisfy airport security staff that they pose no security threat.

I sincerely hope that any airline with which Mr Stott is intending to fly will, as he suggests, refuse to transport him because heaven forbid that I might end up sitting next to him when I next fly.

Paul Baker

Uckfield, Sussex, UK

Damage limits

There is some sense in Mike Pearson's response (*Flight International*, 9-15 April) to the Qinetiq foreign object damage (FOD) radar.

Of course the equipment should not replace existing FOD procedures and diligence. Ways of improving these should always be sought.

However, not all FOD is of this controlled type. Sadly, the most famous example on uncontrolled FOD was the wear strip that punctured an Air France Concorde tyre, resulting in its loss. Any equipment or procedures that would prevent a similar event should be viewed with enthusiasm.

Max Phillipson

Plymouth, Devon, UK