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Lebanese airspace safety compromised!

CHERTSEY/MONTREAL 3 March 2006: The International Federation of Air Traffic Controller's Associations (IFATCA) and the International Federation of Air Line Pilot's Associations (IFALPA) acknowledge with disbelief the careless and ill-advised actions taken recently by the Lebanese Government concerning air traffic control in that country.

In support of a number of industrial claims and following a deadlock in negotiations members of the Lebanese Air Traffic Controllers Association started a "work to rule" action at 20:00 on Wednesday, 1 March. At the start of this action controllers taking part in the work to rule were summarily fired from their jobs and removed from the control centre. These controllers' tasks were taken over by unqualified military officers who have subsequently assumed responsibility for all air traffic control in Lebanon.

IFATCA and IFALPA believe that in the interests of air safety that air traffic control must be carried out by controllers who hold a current ATCO Licence issued in accordance with ICAO Annex 1 and with the appropriate ratings and competency required for their duties. Clearly, the placement of these inexperienced, under-trained and unqualified, officers in key positions has dealt a severe blow to the integrity of air safety not only in Lebanon but to the wider region, with implications for air traffic transiting the country to and from the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

IFATCA and IFALPA respectfully requests that the Lebanese government return qualified and experienced air traffic controllers to their jobs while the dispute is resolved. Safety must at all times remain the number one priority in aviation and must not be compromised under any circumstances.

Notes to editors

IFATCA is the worldwide Federation of air traffic controllers with more than 50,000 members representing 133 countries. Among its goals are the promotion of safety, efficiency and regularity in international air navigation and the protection and safeguarding of the air traffic control profession.

IFALPA represents in excess of 100,000 pilots in more than 95 countries world-wide. The mission of IFALPA is to be the global voice of airline pilots, promoting the highest level of aviation safety and security world-wide and providing services, support and representation to all of its Member Associations. See the Federation website www.ifalpa.org

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