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PRESS RELEASE

DIFFICULTIES IN DOMINICAN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

The Captains Council expresses its concern over the increasing number of reports of communication and management issues within the Dominican Republic's air traffic control system. While we positively value the sustained growth of tourism in the country—driven by successful initiatives to promote the sector by the Abinader administration—we have observed a troubling rise in communication and air traffic management difficulties. This indicates that such growth has not been fully accompanied by a proportional strengthening of the national air traffic control system's capabilities.

Some of the most relevant recent incidents observed include:

1. **Total loss of communication and control:** On May 1, 2025, at 18:41 UTC, the entire northern sector of the Flight Information Region (FIR) lost both communications and radar control with all aircraft operating in that sector. This event occurred simultaneously with similar failures that raised concern in the Newark, New Jersey, United States airport area.
2. **Frequency congestion and inadequate arrival management:** On March 1 of this year, at 19:30 UTC, a United Airlines flight operating the Newark–Santo Domingo route was forced to conduct a high-speed descent after being unable to establish communication with air traffic control for much of its time within the Santo Domingo control area due to frequency saturation. Several U.S. airlines reported similar circumstances during this period - the Dominican Institute of Civil Aviation (IDAC) denied access to the radio and radar recordings of this incident—requested by this council under the Public Access to Information Law—by classifying them as “restricted,” thereby hindering the analysis and mitigation of events of this nature-.
3. **Insufficient staffing during adverse weather conditions:** On March 21, the eastern portion of Dominican airspace experienced high levels of saturation when, due to storms in the area, it became necessary to halt all departing traffic from Punta Cana International Airport. Both the Dominican Association of Air Traffic Controllers (ADCA) and internal IDAC communications demonstrate the high level of demand this situation placed on controllers on duty.
4. **Recurring conflicts with military operations and lack of interagency coordination:** The proximity of San Isidro Air Base to the approach and departure paths of Las Américas International Airport (AILA) has led to recurring air traffic conflicts. This is compounded by the absence of a permanent liaison officer between the Air Force and IDAC at the national air traffic control center, further complicating operational coordination.

Recent accidents related to air traffic management in the United States—including a collision between a civil aircraft and a military aircraft—should serve as a warning for Dominican aviation. The lack of effective integration and training in the use of new weather radar systems on ATC displays, as well as the limited implementation of modern information-sharing technologies such as ADS-B and CPDLC, combined with an insufficient number of controllers during peak hours, continue to increase the complexity of controllers' work. Controllers are often required to operate with minimal staffing during peak periods, without adequate retirement or healthcare plans, and frequently work long hours with limited rest.

It is our position that technical support should be requested from international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). We believe that IDAC, on its own, does not currently have the capacity or the appropriate equipment to effectively manage the exponential growth of aviation in the Dominican Republic. The Captains Council remains willing to support—on a non-profit basis—the search for solutions to these operational challenges.

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