

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates February 2008
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

Question: ATSB 01

Division/Agency: Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Topic: Cabin Oil Bleed on Aircraft

Hansard Pages: 43-44 (19/02/08)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Given the documents which were tabled, which indicated (a) agreements for compensation in relation to this bleed air problem and (b) that the Senate inquiry you referred to, Mr Bills, was effectively lied to by Australian operators, particularly Ansett—in other words, they claimed there was no problem yet, on the other hand, they were signatories to an agreement to be compensated for the problem—presumably it is fair to say that ATSB would have received the same sort of evidence from Ansett that the Senate committee received—that is, that the problem was not able to be determined by their own inspections and they were not aware of a significant bleed air problem.

Mr Bills—I think that is a fair statement, Senator. Clearly, we will check to make sure there is nothing that we are not aware of that we should be aware of, but I am sure that we would not have been aware of that type of arrangement or agreement that you have referred to.

Answer:

A review of relevant investigation files found no evidence that the then Bureau of Air Safety Investigation (BASI), which became part of the new ATSB on 1 July 1999, was aware of the compensation agreements between Ansett and various manufacturers regarding a 'bleed air problem' on BAe146 aircraft, or aware that Ansett had engaged in any process to obtain such compensation. There was also no evidence that BASI had specifically inquired as to whether Ansett had engaged in any process to obtain compensation.

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Question: ATSB 02

Division/Agency: Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Topic: Tricresyl Phosphate Substance

Hansard Pages: 44-45 (19/02/08)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—In relation to the substance that is often complained about—tricresyl phosphate—has ATSB done any work in relation to the capacity for that substance to have an effect on flight crew, cabin crew, if injected into the cabin air?

Mr Bills—I cannot recall what was in our earlier report. Certainly we have looked at hazardous chemicals in cabin air before, but we have not done any particular work on that compound that I am aware of. We will certainly check that.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Answer:

Following the completion of the then Bureau of Air Safety Investigation (BASI) investigation 199702276 (British Aerospace Plc, BAe 146-300, 10 July 1997), the ATSB (incorporating BASI) has conducted no research or other substantive work regarding the capacity of tricresyl phosphate to have an effect on flight crew or cabin crew, if injected into the cabin air.

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Question: ATSB 03

Division/Agency: Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Topic: Cabin Oil Bleed on Aircraft

Hansard Page: 45 (19/02/08)

Senator O'Brien asked:

Senator O'BRIEN—Is it possible for you to advise the committee what the nature of the response was, particularly from Ansett and EastWest, to inquiries about the cabin air contamination at that time?

Mr Bills—Certainly we can take it on notice, Senator.

Answer:

A review of relevant investigation files found that the then BASI (now part of the ATSB) was aware from 1992 of reports of cabin air problems on BAe146 aircraft, and that EastWest and subsequently Ansett was undertaking actions to address the problem. As part of its investigation into occurrence 199702776 (British Aerospace Plc, BAe 146-300, 10 July 1997), BASI investigators held several discussions with Ansett personnel involved in addressing the 146 air quality issue. These discussions occurred in 1997 and 1998.

The nature of the information provided by Ansett to BASI appears to be consistent with that summarised in the Report by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, *Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality in the BAe 146 Aircraft* (October 2000). In brief, Ansett personnel advised in 1997-1998 that it had been and still was actively working to address the situation. However, there was no indication in any of the air quality testing that the level of any contaminants in the air was of concern.

In terms of the air quality testing conducted by or for Ansett, there is no indication that copies of any reports on testing conducted by or commissioned by Ansett were provided to BASI. Although BASI investigators asked for a copy of the final report of the air quality testing conducted by Allied Signal (dated 25 November 1997), it was not provided as it was 'proprietary information'. Ansett personnel verbally briefed BASI investigators on the general results of that and other testing. Notes on these briefings stated that, although contaminants in cabin air were identified in some tests in some conditions, they were not considered to be at levels of concern.

In terms of information provided by Ansett regarding whether the BAe146 met relevant certification requirements, there was no indication that Ansett had concerns regarding whether the aircraft met certification requirements with regards to the level of any contaminants in the air. Ansett was concerned about the level of air flow or ventilation in certain parts of the cabin, and that the air flow may not meet certification requirements. However, based on air flow testing conducted by the aircraft manufacturer on Ansett aircraft in 1998, as well as other information, CASA concluded that the aircraft met relevant certification requirements.