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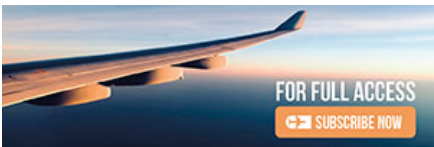


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Argentina Risks Losing FAA Category 1 Safety Rating Amid Audit

by BUSINESS EDITOR on OCTOBER 23, 2024 in @AIRGUIDE BUSINESS, AIRCRAFT BUSINESS, AIRLINE BUSINESS, BUSINESS & PRIVATE AVIATION, GOVERNMENT, REGULATORY & LEGAL, SAFETY



The United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has arrived in Argentina to conduct the final phase of its evaluation under the International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) Program. This critical audit will determine whether Argentina can maintain its Category 1 safety rating, the highest ranking awarded by the U.S. agency, allowing for unrestricted operations between the two countries.

Argentina has held this prestigious Category 1 status since 2005. However, the country's aviation system has faced significant challenges recently. A 2022 audit by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) revealed that Argentina was only meeting 60.47% of international aviation safety

standards, a figure well below the regional average. The most concerning areas of non-compliance were the Civil Aviation Organization, with just a 41.67% compliance rate, and Operations, at 37.29%.

These concerning findings prompted the FAA to request an inspection of Argentina's aviation oversight systems, which was initially delayed but finally conducted in April 2024. During this evaluation, 82 areas requiring corrective action were identified, with significant concerns in airworthiness, operations, and licensing.

In response, the Argentine government took swift action, intervening in the National Civil Aviation Administration (ANAC) in July 2024. María Julia Cordero was appointed as the new administrator to address the systemic issues uncovered by the ICAO audit and the FAA inspection. ANAC implemented a corrective action plan in collaboration with technical experts from ICAO's South American Regional Office. This plan involved updating key procedure manuals, retraining inspectors in airworthiness standards, and improving the certification process for air operators. According to ANAC, 85% of the required actions have been completed and will be presented to the FAA during its current visit.

Despite these efforts, the Argentine government remains concerned about the possibility of a downgrade from Category 1 to Category 2. In an official statement, the Ministry of Transportation acknowledged the urgency of the situation: "While the current administration is working tirelessly to reverse years of mismanagement, the risk of a downgrade remains a real possibility."

Potential Consequences of a Downgrade

If Argentina loses its Category 1 status, the consequences could be severe for its aviation industry. Argentine airlines would face significant restrictions, including the inability to add new routes or increase flight frequencies to the United States. They would also be barred from replacing aircraft on U.S. routes or entering into new codeshare agreements with U.S. carriers, limiting collaboration opportunities between Argentine and American airlines.

Additionally, Argentine carriers would face heightened scrutiny from U.S. authorities, potentially leading to increased operational costs and delays.

“The poor management of previous administrations would not only harm the operational efficiency of Argentine airlines but also tarnish the international reputation of the country’s aviation system,” the Ministry of Transportation noted.

Current U.S.-Argentina Air Operations

Despite the looming uncertainty, air traffic between Argentina and the United States continues without disruption. Several airlines maintain regular routes, including:

- **American Airlines:** 7 weekly flights between New York (JFK) and Buenos Aires (Ezeiza), and 14 weekly flights between Miami and Buenos Aires (Ezeiza).
- **Aerolíneas Argentinas:** 13 weekly flights between Buenos Aires (Ezeiza) and Miami.
- **Delta Air Lines:** 7 weekly flights between Atlanta and Buenos Aires (Ezeiza).
- **United Airlines:** 7 weekly flights between Houston (Intercontinental) and Buenos Aires (Ezeiza).

The FAA’s final decision is expected soon and will have a lasting impact on the future of Argentina’s aviation industry. Maintaining Category 1 is crucial for ensuring the continued growth and competitiveness of Argentine airlines in the U.S. market.

The FAA’s International Aviation Safety Assessment Program, established in 1992, evaluates a country’s adherence to safety standards set by ICAO. A country’s safety rating has a direct impact on its airlines’ ability to operate and expand their services in the U.S. market, making this audit critical for Argentina’s aviation future.

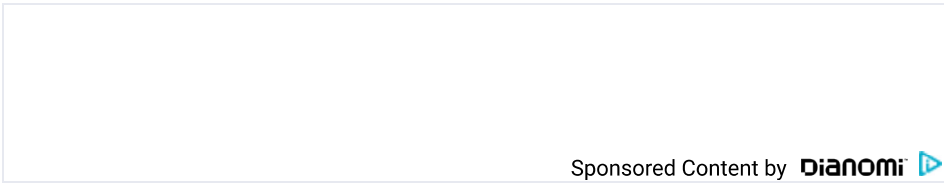
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