



A year later, AA crash probe not yet completed

BY INGRID BROWN Senior staff reporter browni@jamaicaobserver.com
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THE probe to determine what caused American Airlines flight 331 to plough through the perimeter fence at the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston on a rainy night and crash-land close to the sea exactly one year ago is expected to be completed in a year's time.

Yesterday, Lt Col Oscar Derby, director general of the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority — the local agency responsible for the investigation into the crash — said only two reports were outstanding for a draft of the final report to be completed.

Explaining the process, Derby said once these reports have been submitted from the aerodrome and the operations subgroups, the lead investigator will compile a final draft.

"The final draft of the report will be distributed to all interested parties such as the airline, the manufacturer, etc, for them to make their comments and then the final report which would complete the exercise should be ready by about next year this time," Derby told the Observer.

Derby admitted that the final report will have implications for the various suits that have since been filed by the survivors.

"So, we have to be careful to produce an accurate report because it will impact the outcome of the litigation," Derby said.

The Boeing 737-823 aircraft, which was travelling from Miami to Kingston on December 22, 2009, ran off the eastern end of Runway 12 as it attempted to land in heavy rains at approximately 10:22 that night.

The impact cracked the fuselage of the jet, crushed the left landing gear and separated both engines.

There were 154 persons on board the aircraft, including the pilot, co-pilot and four flight attendants.

Earlier this year, Derby described the incident as nothing short of a miracle.

"We should consider this quite a Christmas miracle, as had the aircraft been just a little faster, it would have been in the sea, and just a little slower it would have ended in the road — both options of which would have been quite catastrophic," Derby said then.

Meanwhile, the majority of the 148 passengers have already filed lawsuits against the airline as well as the manufacturer of the aircraft.

A law firm in Florida has informed the Observer that a case involving the 22 passengers it is now representing is set for trial in August 2012.

Alisha Marks, director of a public relations company representing the law firm, said that a United States District Court judge for the Southern District of Florida has signed an order appointing Steven C Marks of the law firm Podhurst Orseck as lead counsel in a lawsuit against American Airlines for passengers who sustained injuries aboard the ill-fated flight.

According to Marks, the recently signed order also calls for the formation of a Plaintiffs Steering Committee (PSC), which will be responsible for co-ordinating and conducting all pre-trial and prosecution aspects of the litigation.

"The trial date has been set for August 2012 so that more eligible passengers may join the case," she explained.

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