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MEDIA RELEASE

PNG ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION COMMISSION ISSUES UPDATE ON THE AIR NIUGINI BOEING 737 ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

AIC Chief Commissioner, Mr. Hubert Namani, today issued an update on the progress and status of the investigation into the Air Niugini Boeing 737 aircraft accident on 28th September 2018, at Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Mr. Namani said, "On 31 January 2019, the AIC issued a Safety Recommendation to Honeywell Aerospace, the manufacturer of the *Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System* (EGPWS) fitted to the aircraft at the time of the accident. This recommendation calls upon the manufacturer to modify the *EGPWS* aural warnings to provide a warning to pilots requiring them to take immediate and decisive remedial action when encountering an excessive rate of descent at a very low altitude similar to that flown by the crew of PXE."

"One *Safety Recommendation* was issued to the FSM Division of Civil Aviation on 8th February 2019, drawing attention to the Chuck International Airport not having an *ICAO Annex 14* compliant *Airport Emergency Plan*. In particular, the airport does not have specialist rescue and fire-fighting equipment and trained personnel for water rescue. Chuuk International Airport has water along three sides of the runway."

Mr. Namani said that of the ten *Safety Recommendations* issued to Air Niugini Limited to date, appropriate safety action has been taken by Air Niugini on three. The AIC has rated those *Safety Recommendations* as **Closed, Response Accepted**.

Many of the ten Air Niugini safety deficiencies found during the AIC investigation were not considered contributing factors to this accident. However, they are all significant safety concerns requiring rectification action by amending Air Niugini Manuals and Checklists, and providing classroom, simulator, and on-job-training and checking for safety compliance. Three recommendations were assessed as likely contributing to the circumstances leading to the accident in that crew resource management *challenge and response training* in the class room was not reinforced in simulator training. The copilot's use of a personal unapproved electronic flight bag likely diverted the pilots' attention from their primary source (approved) performance documents.

The *International Civil Aviation Organization* calls for the operative verb "**shall**" to be used for all instructions vital and essential to safety of flight. The Air Niugini Manuals for the most part used the verb "*should*" inferring an optional recommended practice and not an imperative.



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AIC Chief Commissioner, Mr. Hubert Namani said "in accepting the delegated responsibility, the AIC will now be responsible for issuing the *Final Report*. The AIC team has been, and will continue to work diligently to analyse all evidence and to bring the investigation to a conclusion that will enhance aviation safety.

"The investigation will continue to be a no-blame investigation that is completely independent of State regulators, law enforcement authorities, service providers, and the aviation industry."

Mr. Namani added, "as the investigation agency now responsible for the investigation, the AIC will continue to liaise with the FSM, US National Transportation Safety Board, and Air Niugini Limited, and all other organisations that could assist with evidence to bring about the most comprehensive report to improve aviation safety.

"The AIC will issue an independent *Final Accident Investigation Report* in accordance with the *ICAO Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation*, PNG legislation and the *AIC Investigation Policy and Procedures*."

Mr. Manase said, "This marks a major milestone for the PNG AIC. It is the second delegated major aircraft accident from a Regional neighbour country since July 2018, following the AIC's acceptance of the responsibility for the Air Vanautu, ATR 72, major aircraft accident that occurred at Port Vila on 28 July 2018."

Hubert Namani, LLB
Chief Commissioner