**Safety is not reckoned in money**

**In the run-up to the International Day of the Air Traffic Controller, our attention turned to Kazaeronavigatsia RSE, the biggest provider of air navigation services in Kazakhstan. Azat Gabbasovich Bekturov, the Director General of KAN, tells SKY Magazine about the things he takes pride in, and how air navigation is developing today in Kazakhstan.**

*- Hello, Mr. Bekturov! Thank you for taking the time to speak to us. Can you tell us what Kazaeronavigatsia is focusing on at the moment?*

- What are we focusing on? That's an interesting question. We are focusing on work. We are working well, and striving to become better still. KAN was set up in 1995, and over the years it has grown into one of the most advanced and most modern air navigation systems in the CIS. We have successfully adopted the WGS 84 world geodetic system. We have implemented laser scanning at airports, as well as geodetic and aerial photography. Our safety system meets international flight safety requirements and is in accordance with the standards and recommendations of the ICAO.

We are conscious of a high level of quality in our work. But it is always open to question how objective an opinion that is. When we say that KAN is one of the best air navigation providers in the CIS, or even in Eurasia, that is our own assessment, the opinion of the people we meet, our partners and colleagues. However, only an external audit can supply a proper quality evaluation. And such inspections do exist; there are a great many of them. First of all, we undergo certification: we are inspected by the country's aviation authorities once every three years. This is quite a recent innovation, following changes in the law. Airlines and airports periodically undergo external audit and certification, but Kazaeronavigatsia had not previously had any kind of formal certification. This is necessary, of course, and it was done, amongst other things, at the recommendation of the ICAO. Even though KAN is a monopoly, we still need to be certified in order to get an objective assessment of our working process – that is as it should be. In addition to this, there are voluntary audits, and as it happens we have recently undergone two important external checks.

One of these checks was last year, when we invited the French Civil Aviation University to evaluate our professional training center for compliance with European standards – to see whether we are moving in the right direction and how near to the European level – or how far away from it – we are. We came away with respectable results. As it turned out, the quality of our teaching staff and our program and courses, is at a reasonable international level. Jointly with our French colleagues, we set up a GAP analysis on a host of positions, to see what deficiencies there may be, and thus to understand what needs to be done to bring us into conformance. Now we actually are moving in that direction: we are correcting defects, and I hope that, when we repeat the inspection, we will show even better compliance. What is this for, what is the ultimate aim? It will mean that somebody with a certificate showing that they have been trained at our center will be no different than specialists trained in similar centers in the European Union. And this is becoming particularly important in the light of the construction of the new international training center that will be in Astana.

The second audit, which we underwent this summer, was the SEANS audit – a safety assessment carried out by CANSO. The purpose of this was to assess our assurance of flight safety.

*- Can you go into more detail about the SEANS audit? What is the main job of the CANSO organization?*

CANSO, the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization, is an air navigation service providers' organization. This is our "native" international body, and most of the air navigation companies in the world belong to it. It is quite a young organization. Like all such umbrella organizations, CANSO pursues global goals, specifically the improvement of air navigation throughout the world through the creation of an expert forum for on-going information exchange, training and improvement of working processes.

When CANSO announced that air navigation services could undergo the SEANS (Safety Assessment) audit, I responded immediately. We had been waiting for an audit like this to appear. As I said before, it is interesting and important for us to have an independent expert evaluation of our work. Hearing feedback from people is one thing, but professionally developed and professionally designed tests are another. This audit is both a novelty and a necessity for the navigation sector. For example, IATA audits for airports (ISAGO) and airline companies (IOSA) have existed for a long time and have been successful. Now, there is an audit for air navigation. The statistics have shown, and continue to show, the effectiveness of these audits.

*- What is auditing for? Is it really so necessary? After all, navigation services used to manage without it...*

- This audit lets air navigation services find out from an independent source what state their flight safety is in. For us, the SEANS audit was a chance to test ourselves: to identify and correct weaknesses and to develop our strengths. And now we have the results of the completed tests in our hand. Now, following CANSO's recommendations, we are carrying out a program of measures to eliminate the deficiencies that exist.

*- How many participating countries are there in CANSO? How many of them have been audited so far?*

- There are 87 air navigation service providers who are full members of CANSO, and just 7 of them have been SEANS-audited. Kazakhstan was the fifth country to undergo this certification. We were not afraid to be one of the first, as we weren't doing it to tick boxes or to show off, but principally for ourselves, for our own development.

*- So you could say that the audit is still being developed and tested, and Kazakhstan is part of the test group? If so, then will our presence among the "pioneers" affect Kazaeronavigatsia's international image? And can we count on any concessions in future, during subsequent audits?*

- CANSO does not make a profit, nor is it a tool for profit-making. This is a non-governmental organization that exists to develop aviation overall, and it is the sole international representative of the world's air navigation services. The cost of the audits it conducts consists of the expenditure incurred in connection with the working time and air travel of CANSO's experts. Accordingly, there can be absolutely no question of any concessionary rates.

We never intended to subject the fact of our undergoing the audit, or its results, to universal scrutiny either within the country or outside it. Therefore, as far as Kazaeronavigatsia's image is concerned, this is really a question of its internal image. In undergoing the audit, correcting the issues raised and progressively developing the strong points of the company's activity, all KAN personnel will understand that they are representing services of a high international standard through their work.

*- But still. In business, every investment presupposes the possibility of more earnings. Does this mean that, after undergoing the audit, the world's air traffic control agencies can count on greater profit from their activities?*

- We don't make a single extra dollar out of the fact of having undergone the SEANS audit. But we do get the opportunity to find out how to make even more improvements in our level of flight safety. Investment in safety is not a matter of economics. It is a matter of human life, and from that point of view, investment in safety is a mandatory expense.

Anyway, here is our view for you: safety should not be reckoned in money.

*- How often does Kazaeronavigatsia plan to be audited?*

- The frequency of CANSO audits has not been established. However, I think we ourselves would like to undergo it in two or three years. You can compare it to a medical check-up. A person may understand his own wellbeing and have a rough idea of his state of health, but only a doctor can determine the real condition of his body with any certainty, but examining all the parameters and carrying out qualitative tests. The same is true of a company audit. And, incidentally, periodic health check is a necessity, as is a check on the work of an organization.

*- Are you satisfied with the result of the audit? What conclusions of its own can Kazaeronavigatsia draw?*

- The audit figures are impressive – they were a pleasant surprise for me. The results are strictly confidential, but I can say for certain that the level of compliance with all standards really is high. And the comments and remarks made to us regarding the audit results are at a manageable level. They all more or less amount to "keep developing", "don't omit this measure", and "share your experience". The experts even took the view that the system meets all the standards of the 19 ICAO annexes.

In a nutshell, Kazaeronavigatsia fully comes up to the level of the international standards.

*- We congratulate Kazaeronavigatsia, and you personally, on this successful first specialized audit! Please can you tell our readers what plans and tasks your company has for the near future? What news can we expect next from the world of air navigation?*

- As ever, we have a great many plans. And they are all directed towards enhancing the attractiveness to new users of Kazakhstan's airspace. This should lead to a greater volume of air traffic being served, including transit traffic, which in turn will bring more income and levies into the budget. KAN is now at a new stage in its development. As I've mentioned, a new training center for aviation specialists is planned to be built next year in Astana. The training there will be in full compliance with international standards. However, this is an important topic, and I would not want to touch on it lightly. Therefore I will simply say that what is planned really is on a large scale.

**SKY Magazine is as intrigued as its faithful reader most likely is by the topic of the opening of a new training center in Kazakhstan. Our next interview with Azat Bekturov is therefore already planned. In the next issue, read about the headline news in Kazakhstani aviation: the opening of the new ICAO TRAINAIR PLUS training center!**