



From the Secretary of State

Tim Lankester Esq
10 Downing Street
Whitehall
London SW1

21 June 1979

Dear Tim,

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY - EFFECT OF IPCS STRIKE CALL

You should be aware that the CAA now expects the 24 hour strike called by the IPCS tomorrow to cause major problems for civil aviation because of the anticipated response of air traffic control officers (ATCOs) in certain areas.

The ATCOs are represented by the IPCS but have no pecuniary interest in this strike; their pay is linked to the central Civil Service pay settlement which took effect in April. They have a strike-free record and sought exemption on safety grounds from the IPCS call which the union refused to grant. Individual branches have been left to make their own decisions and as a result the ATCOs at the London Air Traffic Control Centre (LATCC) at West Drayton have been advised to strike. The extent of likely support is not known, but the result could be major disruption in the London Flight Information Region which covers most of the UK south of the Scottish border. ATCO representatives at LATCC have agreed to provide basic NATO air defence commitments.

ATCOs at Heathrow are also expected to come out but at other airports and the Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre are expected to work normally.

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Diktat not
to Strasbourg.

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The CAA yesterday issued a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) to warn airlines that there may be disruption on Friday; they will have to decide very soon on whether to issue a much more severe warning. The CAA/National Air Traffic Services will also have to decide what arrangements it may be possible to make in respect of overflying UK airspace.

The situation is still very confused and subject to rapid change. The CAA is continuing its efforts to persuade the IPCS to change its line and to make it clear that the CAA is not involved in the dispute.

I am copying this letter to Stephen Wall (FCO), John Chilcott (Home Office), Richard Prescott (Paymaster General's Office), Jim Buckley (CSD) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours Sincerely,

T G Harris

T G HARRIS
Private Secretary

Reference

PS/Secretary of State

- cc PS/MOS(T)
- PS/PUSS(T)
- PS/Secretary
- Mr Steele
- Mr Dick CAP
- Mr Roberts CAIR
- Nrs Rowe Inf
- Mr Payne CAP3
- Mr Gildea CAP1

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21 JUN 1979
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
TRADE'S OFFICE

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CAA - EFFECT OF IPCS STRIKE CALL

Further to my earlier minute, I have now had another report from the CAA.

During this evening, by applying flow control procedures, the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) will reduce traffic to about 20% of normal. The CAA has now been able to reach an understanding with ATCO/IPCS representatives whereby the union will authorise sufficient ATCOs to work at the London Air Traffic Control Centre (LATCC) from midnight to maintain air services at up to 25% of normal. The CAA is confident that more than enough ATCOs will report for duty to give effect to this agreement. It is unlikely to be possible to handle more than 25% of normal traffic because of the effects of the strike upon telecommunications and power supplies. The CAA must take account of the availability of maintenance engineers, the extent to which radar will remain effective, and the lack of back-up power once LATCC is switched to the National Grid supply (from its normal diesel generated supply) when the PSA engineers walk out at midnight.

As the Scottish Air Traffic Control Centre is still expected to work normally, overflying aircraft will be directed north over Scotland and, with the cooperation of Shannon Control, it is hoped also to operate a southerly track. On the other side of the Atlantic, Washington and Gander have been advised that these restrictions may apply. Airlines are being told.

A slight worsening in the position is that ATCOs at Glasgow airport and at Sumburgh have now decided to support the strike.

E W Beston

E W BESTON
CAP 2B
21 June 1979