



## INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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### PRESS RELEASE

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#### Italian Court Judgment a detriment to Safety

The International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations condemns the ruling of the Italian court of appeal in Cagliari on 18 March 2010, which confirmed an earlier sentence of two years imprisonment for the controllers who were on duty at Cagliari airport at the time of the controlled flight into terrain accident of a Cessna Citation near Cagliari on the 24 February 2004.

This is but another instance in which the judicial system of a country has shown a lack of understanding of how the aviation system operates and consequently produces a verdict that undermines the provision of the highest level of safety to the very public that is the judiciary's primary constituent.

In international civil aviation it is understood that the ultimate responsibility for the safety of a flight rests with the captain of that flight. This applies to all flights; including those that are operated under Instrument Flight Rules in controlled airspace under the guidance of an Air Traffic Control unit. Air traffic controllers worldwide are aware of this authority of flight captains and are trained to accommodate requests from pilots for specific changes in the status of a flight whenever possible, as long as this does not jeopardize the safety of other flights.

In the case of the accident in Cagliari it was the pilot who requested to perform a visual approach. The controller specifically asked if during such an approach the pilots could provide their own separation from obstacles, and the answer of the pilot was affirmative. The controller subsequently authorized the visual approach, because, under the prevailing rules and regulations in Italy at that time, there was no reason from an air traffic control perspective to withhold such permission.

Sad as the outcome of the event was, it is IFATCA's considered opinion that the pilots were fully accountable for their decision to conduct a visual approach that night. The controllers acted within the norms of internationally established procedures, and it could even be argued that they performed beyond the call of duty by asking the pilots about their ability to maintain their own separation from obstacles during the visual approach.

As a result to this court ruling, our Member Association in Italy, ANACNA, has appealed to its members to not authorize any visual approaches in Italy anymore. IFATCA endorses the approach of our Member Association as being in the professional interest of the Italian air traffic controllers. This reaction demonstrates that criminalizing air traffic controllers for doing their jobs in accordance with their training and experience will only have a negative impact on efforts to continually improve the safety and efficiency of the aviation system.

**IFATCA is the worldwide organization representing more than fifty thousand air traffic controllers in 137 countries. Amongst its goals are the promotion of safety, efficiency and regularity in international air navigation and the protection and safeguarding of the interests of the air traffic control profession.**

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