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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CKIA Night Service to Resume Effective 7 June 2024

Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands (2 June 2024) The Cayman Islands Airports Authority (CIAA), which operates the Owen Roberts International Airport (ORIA) on Grand Cayman and the Charles Kirkconnell International Airport (CKIA) on Cayman Brac, issued a statement today, 2 June 2024, in response to the announcement from Cayman Airways that the airline had cancelled a number of flights over the weekend between Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac.

The Cayman Islands Airports Authority's airport operations are regulated by The Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements (OTARs), which are a set of regulations and standards used to ensure safe and efficient aviation operations within the British Overseas Territories. The OTARs include specific provisions regarding the hours of work for air traffic controllers to ensure their fitness for duty and the safety of aviation operations. These provisions aim to mitigate fatigue and enhance the performance and safety of air traffic controllers by ensuring they are well-rested and capable of performing their duties effectively, and the CIAA is committed to ensuring compliance with these provisions.

Additionally, the normal operating hours as published in the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) of CKIA is 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. and of ORIA is 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., and whilst the CIAA is committed to maintaining the Airports' published operating hours, it accommodated Cayman Airways' request for Boeing-737 flights to and from CKIA to operate outside of these hours over the weekends. These flight operations began in November 2023.

Prior to this in 2019, and in recognising the time it takes to become a licensed ATCO, the CIAA embarked on a rigorous recruitment of Air Traffic Controllers, sending four Caymanian ATC recruits overseas in September of that year for air traffic control training. Of those four, only one was successful in completing the course and becoming certified as an Air Traffic Controller. Following that, eight Caymanian ATC trainees were hired in early 2023, including three for CKIA and five for ORIA. They are currently on a training course that is expected to be completed in December 2024. They will then have six to eight months On-the-Job (OJT) training before they can become fully licensed to perform ATC duties at the relevant Airport.

However, since the beginning of 2023 several staff movements within the Air Traffic Control team have occurred, which include resignations, retirements and extended medical leave. These changes have resulted in some limitations to its air traffic services (ATS) in order to maintain compliance with regulations for ATS operations. The CIAA discussed these limitations with Cayman Airways in March 2024, notifying them that restrictions to out-of-hours operations could be the result. These restrictions would have affected operations after 8:30 p.m. for CKIA.

To mitigate these challenges, the CIAA has been negotiating with a retired Air Traffic Controller for the past two months to provide direct support to CKIA in the short-term. Unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, the negotiation fell through, which added to the challenges it was faced with.

As a result, and to ensure the continued safety of the traveling public, its staff and stakeholders, the CIAA is working on solutions to immediately address the out-of-hours limitations and will continue to accommodate Cayman Airways' jet flight schedules on the weekends in the short-term, effective 7 June 2024, while it develops a longer-term solution.

"We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of safety and security of airport customers and our staff," said CIAA CEO Albert Anderson. "We are also committed to ensuring we comply with the applicable rules and regulations that govern our airport operations."

"We understand that these changes impacted the traveling public over the weekend, and we apologise for any inconvenience this may have had on their travel plans," he added. "We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the airline to maintain the weekend jet service to and from the Brac and to meet the expectations of our valued customers."

Currently, the Cayman Islands Airport Authority boasts 17 fully trained Air Traffic Controllers across both Airports with the majority based in ORIA due to the higher level of air traffic movements.



PHOTO SUBMITTED: Charles Kirkconnell International Airport

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