

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **Comments made by Wilbur Edwards – LIAT's Director Ground Operations, Cargo and Quikpak - at press conference at Fort Young Hotel, Dominica**

**ROSEAU, Dominica, 06<sup>th</sup> September 2010** – A pleasant good morning to the members of the media and welcome to this press conference.

I would like to introduce the persons seated at this table:

- Oliver Haywood – LIAT's Regional Manager South, Ground Operations and Customer Service. Each Country Manager from Guadeloupe down to Guyana reports to Mr. Haywood and he reports to me.
- Gerard Cools-Lartigue – LIAT's Country Manager, Dominica.
- Desmond Brown – LIAT's Corporate Communications Manager
- Jason Whitchurch-Aird – Director of Millennium Freight Services and LIAT's newly appointed Cargo General Sales Agent for Dominica.

We came to Dominica today to meet with your Ministers of Agriculture and Trade in order to unveil our plan to introduce an All Cargo Scheduled Freighter Service into our operations from October 5, 2010 and to demonstrate how Dominica will feature into this plan and how we anticipate Dominicans would derive the many benefits. We just concluded a very productive meeting with the ministers and we believe they are as excited as we are about this latest development in LIAT's history.

We recognize that LIAT is the most suitable carrier to implement an Intra Caribbean Freighter Operation. The governments of the Caribbean are aggressively promoting improved trade between the islands of the sub-region. In order for this to be achieved there will be need for increased opportunities of cargo uplift so that exporters could improve their markets both regionally and internationally.

Because there is little or no cargo uplift facilitation between many of these islands, the time is now perfect for LIAT to take up the mantle as a true Caribbean carrier and provide the necessary uplift to facilitate trade and provide the opportunity for farmers and exporters alike to improve their business through market expansion.

I believe a few studies have been done by other entities in the past on the feasibility of an intra Caribbean Freighter Operations but we did our first serious study in 2003, to convert one of our Dash-8 100 series aircraft into an all cargo plane. At that time, LIAT was in serious financial difficulty so we had to shelve the plan. We were in survival mode at the time and were severely challenged even to purchase the cargo conversion kit which cost about US\$80,000 at the time. We knew we would revisit the plan at the appropriate times as the initial studies revealed a promising outlook.

Indeed we carried out analyses in 2008 and 2009 on the potential economic viability of the introduction of a dedicated Freighter service operating within our existing network. Both analyses pointed to the existence of significant demand for additional reliable cargo service within the Eastern Caribbean.

Interest in the initiative came from a variety of sources including manufacturers, agricultural and seafood producers, tourism and consumer markets. We will be sitting down with DEXIA (Dominica Export Import Agency) today and we anticipate that the same level of interest will be displayed and we hope to cement a good relationship to support two flights a week from Dominica's exporters; particularly the farmers.

A central element of our plan is to partner with larger carriers operating at the three major Hubs – Barbados, Antigua and Trinidad – to provide freight into and out of LIAT's network. Important opportunities exist with these carriers to feed into extra-regional markets.

I wish to state now that we will convert one Dash-8 100 aircraft to a full cargo service beginning from October 5, 2010. In fact, we intend to have a proving flight on September 29 and we intend to stop in Dominica on our way to Barbados. Having cleared all the hurdles, there is nothing to stand in our way and we intend to build reliability and integrity into our schedule in a very short time. In addition to cargo, the aircraft will also assist with the movement of excess baggage which is a real problem in Dominica. The aircraft has a capacity of 8,000 lbs.

The Company will utilize automated cargo systems software to make bookings, generate manifests, provide rate calculations, and cargo tracking services on our new web site, [www.liatcargo.com](http://www.liatcargo.com). This web site will be opened for the startup.

We envisage operating five days a week allowing weekends for routine maintenance and for back-up in the event of charters or other unscheduled business. However, we plan to start off cautiously with a three-day a week operation until the demand dictates an increase.

Regional Manager Oliver Haywood, who is based in Barbados, is here today to show full support for any Dominica initiative. He will make sure that your shipments to Barbados are properly handled by our new cargo handling agent CAHCO (Caribbean

Aircraft Handling Company) and your connecting cargo to New York, London etc. is safely transferred and protected.

Our Cargo GSA (General Sales Agent) Millennium Freight Services will represent the Dominican cargo customers interest by providing required information, assisting in the growth of business, helping in the search for new markets and working with Operatives, particularly with DEXIA in guaranteeing the lift and assuring the provision of integrity in the service through relationships with LIAT and associated partner airlines.

Mr. Gerard Cools-Lartigue will provide whatever support is required to help Dominican exporters to expand their business and to fulfill Dominica's potential and his long held dream of bringing the freshest and the best agricultural produce to the tables in the Caribbean and abroad. Mr. Cools-Lartigue will also call on the Freighter service during peak season to move bulk baggage and provide the type of relief Dominicans have been looking forward to for a long time.

We will now take some questions.

-ENDS-

**About LIAT**

LIAT is one of the leading Caribbean airlines. It is owned by regional shareholders, with the major shareholders being the Governments of Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. More information about LIAT may be found at [www.liat.com](http://www.liat.com).

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