

**Press Release: 18th October 2018**

Aerotoxic Association submits evidence of devastating personal experiences to International Criminal Court

After a call for evidence in May 2018, the Aerotoxic Association has this week submitted a substantial body of evidence regarding Aerotoxic Syndrome to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The Aerotoxic Association contends that the airline industry is in direct violation of WHO “Right to Healthy Indoor Air” guidelines and has demanded an Independent Public Inquiry, on whether known solutions should be introduced on aircraft for the safety of all those who fly.

Through their evidence, the Aerotoxic Association further considers that the airline industry has acted with malice and is knowingly breaching an EASA regulation stating that “Crew and passenger compartment air must be free from harmful or hazardous concentrations of gases”. Alongside a pending legal judgement in France between easyJet aircrew and the British airline, this is anticipated to have serious repercussions for the airline industry worldwide.

In the evidence, among numerous personal testimonies to the devastating effects of aerotoxic syndrome is that of Ms Evelyn van den Heuvel, a former KLM flight attendant in the Netherlands. She explained, “My complaints started as dizziness, headache, worse memory, often nausea and tiredness. They became worse. My concentration became worse and worse. My hands and feet were tingling, and later my hands and eyes also started to tremble and after that, my whole body. My vision became worse; my vision was blurred, I had tunnel vision and could not judge distances properly. My hands and feet and legs sometimes fell out. My hands cramped, and I made uncontrollable movements, first with my hands, later also my whole body and my head.”

Ms van den Heuvel continued, “In June 2013 I made my last flight as a stewardess, and after that flight I reported sick. When I got the results of blood tests I really couldn’t ignore it any longer, the results were clear; my DNA analysis showed that I am the worst type of detoxifier and an auto-antibody study showed that I suffered chronic nerve damage. I was referred to a neurologist who concluded on the basis of my research and story that it should in all probability be Aerotoxic Syndrome. It is now over 5 years after my last flight and the impact of the damage sustained remains enormous.”

Having had contact with around 2,500 potential victims of toxic air poisoning on aircraft in the last 10 years, both aircrew and passengers from around the world, the Aerotoxic Association knows that this shocking case is very common.

John Hoyte, founder of the Aerotoxic Association, stated, “The problem of passengers and aircrew being exposed to toxic air has been known about since the 1950’s, and there has been mounting evidence to support the causal link between exposure on aircraft and both acute and chronic ill health. Despite this, the industry, the UK Government and regulatory bodies have yet to take any action to prevent this and to protect the public. Ms van den Heuvel’s case is one of many we are passing to the International Criminal Court, alongside evidence of the industry covering up the facts about aerotoxic syndrome.”

Another testimony contained in the evidence is that of Ms Samantha Sabatino and 20 other UK passengers from a flight to Florida in February 2007 that experienced a “fume event”. This was featured in an Australian documentary “Toxic Flyer” in 2013, with these passengers having suffered severe health impacts for many years.

John Hoyte continued, “In most areas of life we work on the precautionary principle to protect health and wellbeing, yet the industry and regulators have buried their heads in the sand. It is time for an Independent Public Inquiry to finally resolve this and to determine the necessary actions to protect the public. There are solutions available to the airlines to help protect passengers and crew from this, with several presented at the Global Cabin Air Quality Executive forum last month in London, but air passengers are still put at risk every day from this preventable danger.”

While noting that frequent flyers, pregnant women, children and the elderly are at particular risk from aircraft cabin toxic air, the Aerotoxic Association demands that airlines implement the known technical solutions, that is:

1. Changing to less toxic oil
2. Filtering of bleed air
3. Installing toxic air detectors

John Hoyte concluded, “For the past 10 years or more the airline industry has covered up this huge issue and now they must act to protect the public or reap the consequences of their negligent behaviour.”

This comes in the same week that the union Unite also called for a public inquiry after coroners across England and Wales were told of the need for additional tests to take place where the cause of death is suspected to relate to toxic cabin air on aircraft.

The Aerotoxic Association was set up in 2007 to raise this issue of toxic air exposure in aircraft and to support those suffering from aerotoxic syndrome. Since Aerotoxic Syndrome was first named in scientific research in 1999 there has been mounting research evidence of the link between toxic cabin air and ill health, culminating in a study published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2017 which established a causal link.

The cause of Aerotoxic Syndrome has been shown to be the contaminated and unfiltered bleed air used in the aircraft cabin. In an aircraft, a supply of pressurised air is required, and this is supplied direct from the compressor section of the jet engine and is known as ‘bleed air’. As this originates from the jet engines and is unfiltered, it can lead to toxic substances entering the cabin due to a fundamental design flaw. Unfiltered bleed air is mixed inside the aircraft with recirculated cabin air.

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**Photos/images:**

1. Photo of Evelyn van den Heuvel, former KLM flight attendant
2. Photo of John Hoyte, founder of the Aerotoxic Association

3, 4, 5 Files of evidence sent to The ICC in The Hague

**Attachment**: Open Letter to the ICC.

**Interviews** with John Hoyte, Chairman, and Peter Lawton, Aerotoxic Association supporter, can be arranged.

**Ms Evelyn van den Heuvel**

A former KLM flight Attendant who featured in the Dutch TV ‘ZEMBLA’ interview on 16th November 2017 – see: <https://youtu.be/P94i7_eM13A>

**Ms Samantha Sabatino**

Experience on flight XLA120 on 1st February 2007 featured in Australian “60 minutes” documentary “Toxic Flyer” in 2013 – see: <https://youtu.be/bM5Ht5v6c8g?t=586>

**Coverage and Evidence background**

**BBC Panorama: “Something in the air”, 21 April 2008**

Broadcast billed as showing “how air passengers could be exposed to toxic fumes in the cabin while flying”. Details of the Panorama programme can be found here:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/7351093.stm>

The programme can be watched here:

<https://youtu.be/3dsDznr4z5w>

Numerous scientific papers and presentations looking at this issue, a selection of which are:

* Ramsden J. Contaminated aircraft cabin air: aspects of causation and acceptable risk. (2012)
* Wolkoff P, Crump D, Harrison P. Pollutant exposures and health symptoms in aircrew and office workers: Is there a link? (2016)
* Michaelis S. Health and flight safety implications from exposure to contaminated air in aircraft. (2010)
* Heutelbeck A, Budnik L, Baur X. Health disorders after “fume events” of aircraft crew members: facts and fiction. (2016).
* C. Vyvyan Howard, David W. Johnson, John Morton, Susan Michaelis, David Supplee, Jonathan Burdon. [Is a cumulative Exposure to a Background Aerosol of Nanoparticles Part of the Causal Mechanism of Aerotoxic Syndrome?](https://gavinpublishers.com/articles/Review-Article/Nanomedicine-and-Nanoscience-Research/Is-a-Cumulative-Exposure-to-a-Background-Aerosol-of-Nanoparticles-Part-of-the-Causal-Mechanism-of-Aerotoxic-Syndrome)(2018)

**WHO published study**:

“Aerotoxic syndrome: a new occupational disease?”, June 2017; Susan Michaelis, Jonathan Burdon, C. Vyvyan Howard; Public Health Panorama, Vol 3, Issue 2 (Available here: <http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/341533/5_OriginalResearch_AerotoxicSyndrom_ENG.pdf?ua=1> )

**BALPA conference 20-21 April 2005.**

BALPA (British Airline Pilots Association) conference in London on contaminated air concluded, “There is a workplace problem resulting in short term and long term illness among flight crew (both pilots and cabin crew); The workplace where these illnesses are being induced is the aircraft cabin environment. This is resulting in significant flight safety issues, in addition to unacceptable flight crew health problems”.

BALPA Contaminated Air Protection: Air Safety and Cabin Air Quality International Aero Industry Conference. Held at Imperial College, London, 20-21 April 2005. Full conference report here: <https://www.aerotoxic.org/pdfs/BALPA-CAPC-London-April-20051.pdf>

And:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfkF27BnpKU>

**Parliamentary debate, 17 March 2016**

A debate in Parliament on “Cabin Air Safety/Aerotoxic Syndrome” heard many members call for an Independent Inquiry, and the then Department of Transport minister stated, “I stress how seriously I take the issue and how important it is that we get more evidence.”

Full transcript is here:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-03-17/debates/16031729000001/CabinAirSafetyAerotoxicSyndrome>

**GCAQE (Global Cabin Air Quality Executive) forum**: 25-26 September 2018, London, heard from international industry representatives on air filter and fume detector solutions.

**Unite call for public inquiry after coroner warning on toxic cabin air**, 17 October 2018:

<https://unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2018/october/unite-calls-for-public-inquiry-after-coroner-warning-on-toxic-cabin-air/>

**About the Aerotoxic Association**

The Aerotoxic Association was founded in June 2007 to raise this issue and support those suffering from aerotoxic syndrome. It has provided guidance and advice to thousands of airline pilots, cabin crew and passengers regarding Aerotoxic Syndrome, which is known to affect the peripheral central nervous system and the brain causing a range of gastro-intestinal, neurological and psychological symptoms.

Former BAe 146 pilot Captain John Hoyte founded the Aerotoxic Association Ltd. on 18th June 2007 at the UK Houses of Parliament to support aircrew and passengers whose short and long-term health had also been affected by toxic oil fume exposure in the confined space of commercial jets.

Capt. Hoyte had to retire due to ongoing severe symptoms of Aerotoxic Syndrome and was one of 27 BALPA (British Airline Pilots Association) pilots tested by University College London and all 27 or 100% showed evidence of toxic poisoning and reduced cognitive function.

In May 2018 the Aerotoxic Association issued a widely covered call for evidence towards a request for an Independent Public Inquiry by the ICC in The Hague.

**What is Aerotoxic Syndrome?**

Aerotoxic Syndrome is the term given to the illness caused by exposure to contaminated air in jet aircraft. This term was first introduced in a published paper in 1999 by Dr Harry Hoffman (U.S.), Professor Chris Winder (Australia) and Jean Christophe Balouet PhD (France):

“Aerotoxic Syndrome: Adverse health effects following exposure to jet oil mist during commercial flights“.

Those who have been subject to toxic oil exposure normally complain of headaches, breathing difficulties, muscle aching and exhaustion. Those who suffer full Aerotoxic Syndrome symptoms, where repeated exposures of toxic chemicals attack the central nervous system (CNS), mainly show neurological symptoms which can be many and varied. Symptoms can include vision problems, breathing problems, increased tiredness, lack of concentration, word finding problems, memory impairment, cognitive problems and the inability to focus.

More details here: <https://www.aerotoxic.org/what-is-aerotxic/>

**Aerotoxic Association membership**

The Aerotoxic Association has recently launched a membership scheme for those interested in this campaign and for help and support. For £20 per year members:

* Have access to an exclusive members only self-help forum.
* Are able to view the fictional Aerotoxic film: ‘Flight 313 – The Conspiracy’
* Can download a copy of the peer reviewed book ‘Aerotoxic Syndrome – Aviation’s Darkest Secret’ by Capt. John Hoyte 2014, published by Pilot Press Ltd.
* Receive e-news bulletins.
* Actively support the work to achieve the aims and objectives of Aerotoxic Association.

More information is at www.aerotoxic.org

For media enquiries, contact:

Chris Brown, Mancroft Communications

T: 01986 788011. M: 07967 343653. E: chris@mancroftcommunications.co.uk