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TACA Airlines passenger sues after El Salvador runway crash

12/14/2010



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An El Salvador-based airline was negligent when one of its pilots attempted to land the aircraft on a short runway in a “wholly unsafe” manner, an injured passenger alleges in a California federal court lawsuit.

Bryan Cunningham was on board TACA International Airlines' Flight 390 from El Salvador to Honduras in May 2008 when the plane overshot the runway at Toncontin Airport.

According to Cunningham's complaint in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, the runway is short — only 5,300 feet — and there is a cliff-like ravine within a few yards of the end of the runway.

The high altitude of the airport requires planes to take a steep approach to land on the short runway, the complaint says.

Cunningham says the pilot of his flight had overshot the beginning of the runway twice but on the second attempt “made the fatal decision to land anyway.”

The wheels touched down halfway down the length of the wet runway, he says, causing the aircraft to shoot over the ravine and down onto the paved street below.

The plane's fuselage broke into three pieces, the complaint says, and the accident killed several passengers and the pilot. In addition, three cars were crushed by the aircraft, killing two people.

The plaintiff says several of the plane's safety devices that were intended to help passengers deplane in the event of an emergency

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failed to function or were not working properly.

Cunningham argues the pilot was negligent in attempting to land after overshooting the short runway and failed to maintain proper control in order to bring the plane to a safe stop.

The plaintiff also takes issue with what he says were the lack of safety devices on the plane to assist passengers in an emergency.

The plaintiffs are represented by Ronald L.M. Goldman and Kate E. Gillespie of Baum Hedlund Aristei & Goldman in Los Angeles.

Cunningham v. TACA International Airlines et al., No. 2:10-cv-09164-SVW-FMO, *complaint filed* (C.D. Calif. Nov. 29, 2010).

Comments (2)

12/16/2010 9:02:56 AM by Anonymous

The name of the airport is: Toncontín International Airport (IATA: TGU, ICAO: MHTG). Where does it say that this happened outside Honduras?

12/14/2010 9:11:56 PM by Anonymous

The runway is in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The crash occurred in Honduras. Check your facts.

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