

# ATC in Zimbabwe at breaking point

Declan Selleck  
16 December, 2019



The Air Traffic Controllers' Association of Zimbabwe (ATCAZ) has raised concerns with the government over airspace safety.

They say that ageing equipment is mainly to blame, with **loss of air-to-ground radio comms** in the upper airspace now a common problem. There have been **complete radio comms blackouts** on four days this year.

ATCAZ also report that **ATC staff are overworked**; this was made apparent last week at FVRG/Harare airport when controllers who had worked the night shift refused to extend their hours in the morning, citing incapacitation and fatigue, forcing flights delays and cancellations.

It seems this particular incident provoked letters from ATCAZ to the Zimbabwe government to be leaked to local press, which detailed the long-standing concerns that obsolete ATC systems now pose an possible danger to airspace safety.

No word yet from the **Zimbabwe CAA**, except one tweet claiming that there's no problem - "our airspace is open and flights are operating as normal," they say.



Our attention has been drawn to some reports circulating on various media platforms this morning.

Our airspace is open and flights are operating as normal.



9:05 AM · Nov 26, 2019 ·

The Zimbabwe government this week have said they are attempting to **acquire a new radar system**. Transport and Infrastructural Development minister Joel Matiza is quoted as saying – “CAAZ long identified the requirements for replacement of airspace management systems in 2013 which systems comprised air traffic control communications system, navigational aids systems, radar surveillance and aeronautical information management (AIM) systems. The authority is in the process of procuring the airspace management systems. The project implementation will be phased starting with the air traffic control system. The cost of the radar surveillance system is about US\$22 million.”

Last week, IATA issued an updated version of their **Inflight Broadcast Procedure (IFBP)** guidance doc for Africa, having added FLFI/Lusaka to the list of FIR’s where this procedure should be applied. There’s no mention of Zimbabwe here, but it now appears that operators should prepare for degraded comms for flights through the FVHF/Harare FIR as well. Whatever new ATC systems the government may or may not install here, such things take time in this part of the world, so don’t expect any improvement any time soon.