

SAN DIEGO COUNTY
REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY

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April 8, 2010

Mr. Suhail Kahlil
Chair, Airport Subcommittee
Peninsula Community Planning Board

Dear Mr. Kahlil –

This letter is in response to the “aircraft flight tracker” issues you raised during public comment at the April 1, 2010 San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Board meeting. I understand from your comments that some members of the Peninsula community question the credibility of the PASSUR Aerospace “Airport Monitor” product and are convinced that not all aircraft departures from San Diego International Airport are depicted as they occur. You asked that the Authority:

- Request the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to “certify” the platform as true to the radar data used by FAA to direct aircraft in flight, and
- Enhance Airport Monitor to provide more scalability, to add the location of the airport’s 24 remote noise monitoring terminals and to provide a method of determining the closest distance an aircraft comes to a residence, and
- Spell out the limitations (FAA-mandated ten minute data delay for security and deletion of sensitive and military flights) more prominently on the product discussion page or add them to the scrolling information banner.

First, a bit of background. In 2006, the Airport Authority contracted with PASSUR Aerospace for an internet-based product (Airport Monitor) to provide the community a means of independent assessment of arrival and departure flight tracks from San Diego International Airport. Prior to this date, community members who had questions about aircraft flight track deviations relied on the technical staff at the Authority’s Noise Mitigation Department to provide tracking details from the Airport’s computerized noise and operations monitoring system. As discussed by Mr. Steve Roe, representing PASSUR at the April 1 Board meeting, Airport Monitor uses a “passive” antenna placed in proximity to the FAA’s primary radar (ASR-9) antenna at Miramar MCAS that captures the flight tracking data as it is transmitted from the ASR-9 and downloads it into the system.



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I directed the Noise Mitigation Department to review the issues you raised and provide information regarding how we can accommodate your requests.

- **Product "certification"** – The vendor (PASSUR) asserts that the maximum error in the product is: Altitude - +/- 100 feet, Range +/- 150 feet and Azimuth +/- 0.3 degrees. The information received from the Technical Operations staff at Southern California TRACON states that "the system has an accuracy of +/- 5 ACPs (.44 degrees) for azimuth and .0625 nautical miles (+/-151.8 feet) for range." Additionally, the Acting Air Traffic Manager for San Diego International's Air Traffic Control tower separately stated that "SAN (San Diego International Airport) has not changed any departure procedures. SAN Tower cross checked departure tracks between FAA tools and the PASSUR (Airport Monitor) website. The FAA flight tracks mirror the PASSUR site flight tracks." He added that "The accusation that the Authority is sharing inaccurate information with the local residents is in error. The flight track data is correct on the PASSUR web site."
- **Product enhancement** – The contract for the Airport Monitor product is due for renewal later this year. The Authority intends to release a Request for Proposal for a new contract, as there are two vendors that provide similar internet-based flight tracking products. We will ensure that the requested enhancements are addressed in any new product.
- **Product limitations** – We are in the process of updating the system description (HELP) page with the vendor to more prominently display the system limitations mandated by FAA. A note to that effect was recently added to the scrolling information banner below the display.

I hope the above information is responsive to the issues you raised at the April 1 Authority Board meeting. Please contact Dan Frazee, Director, Airport Noise Mitigation, at (619) 400-2781.

Sincerely,



Thella F. Bowens
President/CEO