Overview

Don’t fly near the nuclear plant near Hartsville, SC. The local Homeland Security people might do anything and think they have the charter do so.

There have been several topics of concern that have been addressed by the Committee since the last Board meeting. Of continuing concern at this time is the grounding of all Blanik L-13 sailplanes. The FAA continues to “evaluate” the Airworthiness Directive which EASA issued over a year ago. Other issues addressed during this period include the FAA conducting unannounced ramp checks at soaring contests and Program Letters. And (finally) transponder code 1202 was officially assigned to gliders.

Committee Structure

Committee Chair    Stephen Northcraft
Airspace    Cindy Brickner, Hal Becker on transponders
Pilot Certification   Rich Carlson (SSF Trustee)
Airport Utilization   Stephen Northcraft
Aircraft Certification   S. Northcraft (acting)
RTCA and Special Issues  Bernald Smith
GPS/DAFFI    Rick Sheppe
FAA Rule-making Advisory Comm. Tim Anderson
Surveillance    Gerry Molidor

Aircraft Certification

Grounding of LET Blanik L-13 Aircraft

EASA issued an Airworthiness Directive (AD) in July, 2011 which detailed specific modifications which must be accomplished in order to return the L-13s to service. As of this date, the FAA has not concurred by issuing their own AD. In continuing discussions with the FAA, they expressed concern that additional information is required from EASA in order to accept the proposed modifications.

IAR Brasov Lark

The SSA asked the FAA to investigate where the TC holder on this aircraft stands on extending the life Limit on the 2-place Lark. We received the following from the TC holder through the FAA:
"We could get in contact with the CAA Romania today and I regret having to confirm that the TC-holder is in the process of bankruptcy. However there is a limited change
that another company takes over the TCs. We have no unsafe condition pending thus we will wait some time in order to give the insolvency trustee a chance before we consider the aircrafts to be orphan."

**Airports**

The SSA responded to a notice to revise AC-153/5300. The USPA (parachute) requested that we submit a response to the FAA proposal. Essentially the FAA wants to “design” parachute landing areas for airports. The proposed changes would (among other things) restrict where parachutists could land on or near airports.

The saga of Gliders using the Saratoga Springs, NY airport continues. Members of the EXCOM, the Clubs and Chapters Committee, and this Committee have provided information to the club(s) involved.

**Airspace – Transponder code 1202**

The FAA officially assigned transponder code 1202 to gliders effective March 7, 2012.

**Foreign pilots – license issues**

This happens occasionally. Certificates issued under part 61.75 are only valid while the foreign license is valid. If the foreign license becomes invalid the US certificate is also invalid. This typically happens if the foreign certificate is only valid if the pilot has a current medical. Without proof that the foreign license is valid, the US license is invalid. The best solution for foreign pilots resident in the US is to get a US pilot certificate issued on the basis of a practical test. You do not need to be a US citizen to get a US pilot license.

**Ramp Checks and Program Letters**

The SSA conducted discussions with the FAA on the subject of ramp surveillance and program letters.

The SSA engaged in a dialogue with the FAA on the topic of surveillance so that we can accurately inform our membership, and the FAA can advise their local FSDO inspectors, of our respective concerns on how surveillance of gliders and glider operations is currently performed. One of the gains coming out of the conversations we had was that the FAA acknowledged that ramp checks conducted during critical pre-flight times can have a detrimental effect on safety. The FAA indicated that they would be issuing guidance that ramp checks should not be conducted within one hour of planned takeoff time.

As has been noted by the FAA in the past, and acknowledged by the SSA, our membership struggles with the Program Letter requirements spelled out in the Operating Limitations (OL) issued to gliders certified in the Experimental/Racing & Exhibition
category. The SSA believes that the Program Letter can be streamlined without modifying the intent of that document, and that doing so will both serve the pilot community and address issues of variation of interpretation of this requirement among the local FSDOs.

Gerry Molidor is following up on these topics.

**Nuclear Plant proximity issue**

A glider pilot flying near the nuclear plant near Hartsville, SC was arrested for doing so. Homeland Security initially asked the local sheriff to order him to land at the local airport and arrest him for violating the FARs. However, the FAA indicated that no FARs were violated. So the pilot was charged with “Breach of Peace”. Eventually the charges were dropped (at considerable expense to the pilot). Given the circumstances (no notice of any kind of restricted area on the charts) it is disconcerting that the Department of Homeland Security can take such a heavy handed approach to general aviation.

**Dataplate**

The Data Plate exemption made permanent by the FAA in April, 2010 is still permanent. [http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=8671991229&show=blog&id=2062](http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=8671991229&show=blog&id=2062)