FLY LEGAL DAY HIGHLIGHTS THE DANGERS OF ILLEGAL CHARTER

News / Business aviation

The Air Charter Association is raising awareness of the dangers of illegal charter flights and calling on the industry to report suspicious charters, ahead of Fly Legal Day, which takes place on Sunday 21 January 2024. Fly Legal Day marks the fifth anniversary of the accident where Premier League footballer Emiliano Sala and his pilot, David Ibbotson, tragically lost their lives in an illegally chartered aircraft crash in the English Channel, on 21 January 2019.Over the last year The ACA has raised several reports of suspicious charter flights with authorities, resulting in action being taken against one operator, while flights have been prevented from taking off and unlicensed operators are being monitored to prevent illegal commercial flights.

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Glenn Hogben, chief executive, The ACA, commented: “For many years The Air Charter Association has campaigned to raise awareness and for legislation changes to be made to combat illegal charter flights. There has been greater public awareness of the dangers of illegal charter since the Sala incident, which has prompted an increase in reports to authorities. However, at the end of 2023 another fatal aircraft accident occurred with many similarities to the Sala case, although we hope the investigation will prove otherwise. Our response must be to refocus our efforts and demonstrate our core values, which centre on upholding the highest standards, trust, professionalism and above all else, safety. Using one of our trusted and accredited member companies ensures you will avoid the significant risk caused by unknowingly travelling on an illegal charter flight.”

An illegal charter is an unlicensed aircraft charter, where the operator does not have an Air Operator Certificate or Air Carrier Certificate, is operating a private aircraft and accepting payment, which is not legally permitted. Operators without these licences are not required to adhere to the strict regulatory standards of maintenance, crew training and operational management that ensure the highest level of safety for travellers.

Fly Legal Day aims to shine a light on this dangerous and illicit practice, with the hope of preventing future tragedy.

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