
UPDATE ON AND OUTLOOK FOR ARGYLE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PROJECT
AS AT 13TH MAY 2009

On March 6th, I visited the site of the airport project and was quite pleased with the progress of the work, as well as the spirit in which the work is being done. There is a clear and steadfast commitment by the International Airport Development Company (IADC) to see this project to completion on time. As I said before, the completion date is now 31st March 2012.

This report gives an update on the progress of work on the Argyle International Airport project as at 13th May 2009.

Progress of earthworks

Since August 13th 2008, when earthworks on the Argyle International Airport began in earnest, the **Chatoyer-Che contingent** has been concentrating on clearing and grubbing the area, demolishing vacant houses, removing the top soil, and creating an embankment in the valley within the first kilometre of the runway. To date, the progress of earthworks in quantifiable terms is as follows:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Total Volume</u>	<u>Volume Executed</u>	<u>% Progress</u>
Clearing and grubbing	868,410 m ²	370,200 m ²	42.6%
Demolition of houses	48,915 m ²	5,670 m ²	11.6%
Removal of Topsoil	434,204 m ³	175,258 m ³	40.4%
Embankment	3,334,408 m ³	409,861 m ³	12.3%

Additional equipment

Following up on its promise to assist with the earthworks on the project, the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela made available to our government, 37 pieces of heavy earth moving equipment and an variety of spares, costing US\$10 million (EC\$27 million). These equipment have been fully employed on the project since August 13th 2008.

Recently also, the Government of Austria, made to the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines a grant of US\$185,000 (EC\$502,625) to assist with the purchase of three compactors for the project. These compactors were bought and are also fully utilised on the project.

However, in order for the IADC to complete the amount of earthworks required for the airport project to become operational by March 2012, it needs to acquire additional heavy equipment. For this reason, IADC has recently purchased, from its own resources, several pieces of **used** equipment, some of which have already been delivered to the project site, while others are being shipped and will be delivered soon.

The equipment recently purchased are as follows:

- (a) 4 Articulated Rock Trucks
- (b) 1 CAT 345 Excavator
- (c) 1 CAT 330 Excavator, with Hydraulic Hammer
- (d) 1 Wagon Drill
- (e) 2 Bulldozers (1 - D8, and 1 - D9)
- (f) 2 Motor Scrapers

With these additional pieces of heavy equipment, IADC is confident that, barring unforeseen natural disasters, the earthworks on the airport project would be speeded up.

Workshop and Fuel Station

To support the earthworks, a workshop has been constructed on site to carry out repairs of all equipment to reduce downtime. A fuel station has also been erected on site to eliminate the long frequent trips into Kingstown, and to have a guaranteed supply of fuel on site. These two facilities will also be needed by the new airport, during its operational phase.

Blasting Operations

Blasting operations commenced on 5th May 2009 and will continue for the rest of the year. These blasting operations will be carried out during the early afternoon period on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays of each week.

For the benefit of homeowners who live within a defined distance from the blasting operations, I wish to make it clear that IADC has in place an All Risk Insurance policy that covers any damage to their properties from its blasting operations.

These homeowners would also recognise that IADC's officials have already visited their homes for the purpose of collecting photographic and descriptive information of the physical state of their homes, so that IADC can assist them with any future claims that they may have to make on the Insurance Company for compensation for any damage done to their homes. I trust that no one would suffer any damage, but in the event it happens, we have a facility to deal with compensation.

Employment and Training

The airport project has so far created employment for 85 Vincentians. Many of these are technical workers who form part of the **Chatoyer-Che** contingent, which includes 42 Cuban engineers, technicians and operators.

Over the life of the airport project, IADC will therefore provide opportunities for Vincentian project workers to be trained on in a number of areas. At present, many are now working side-by-side with highly experienced Cuban engineers, technicians and operators in way that allows for learning and human resource development to take place, as in a virtual university.

In addition to this, IADC is already embarked on the process of hiring other Vincentians, who will be trained in management and operations of an international airport. This training

will take the form of internships/attachments at airports in (a) Atlanta, USA, (b) Montego Bay, Jamaica, (c) Piarco, Trinidad and Tobago, (d) Lisbon, Portugal, (e) Funchal, Madeira, and at specialised institutions for training of air traffic controllers in Cuba and Mexico.

Terminal Building and other Landside Facilities

In March 2009, IADC received a visit from a Taiwanese engineering firm called CECI Engineering Consultants Inc. The firm felt it necessary to come to St. Vincent to gather first hand information, as they prepare to submit a bid for the contract for designing and supervising the work on the terminal building and other landside facilities for the project.

One may recall that the government of Taiwan has pledged an amount of US\$30 million (EC\$81.5 million) for the construction of the terminal building and other landside facilities for the Argyle International Airport. IADC expects that the successful Architectural firm will complete the designs for these facilities by the end of September 2009. When these designs are completed, IADC will make them available for public scrutiny and comment.

Airport Master Plan

IADC continues to collaborate with Professor Federico Dovali of the Airport and Auxiliary Services (ASA) of Mexico on the Master Plan for the Argyle International Airport. ASA is a government company that designs, builds and operates about 20 airports in Mexico. The support from ASA is part of the assistance promised by the government of Mexico.

The Master Plan for the Argyle Airport is being done to guide the development of the Argyle airport over the next 30 years, in a way that meets the demands for growth in local industries, environmental protection and aviation services, consistent with overall national development.

Work on this Master Plan started in June 2008 and is expected to be completed by June 2009. Even so, IADC has decided to implement, at least one aspect of the recommendations of this Master Plan.

IADC's recent decision to increase, by another 30 acres or so, the land space for the terminal building and other landside facilities is done to allow for these facilities to grow in a cost-effective and orderly manner in the long term. Let me point out that the land space earmarked earlier by the Cuban designers for the terminal building and other landside facilities is adequate and may suit our needs for the next 15-20 years.

However, in making the decision to implement one of the recommendations of the Master Plan, **before** the design and construction of the terminal building and other landside facilities, IADC has seized a glorious and one-time opportunity to design these buildings and to locate them on the land space so that we can have a more structured, cost-effective and orderly growth of these facilities over the next 25-30 years, and well beyond.

The decision to purchase additional lands in the area of the terminal building is also a sound policy decision for the government. Apart from the positive long term growth effects, the decision also allows government (a) to take ownership of adjacent lands today, when the land price is likely to be much lower, and (b) to control developments on land that would, in future, be normally required for expansion of the airport facilities.

The decision to purchase the additional 30 acres or so of land today would also help us avoid past mistakes and the difficulties that we now experience at the E.T. Joshua Airport at Arnos Vale, where there is virtually no land space at all available for the expansion of the apron, erection of new hangers for aircraft, or expansion of the terminal building.

Wind studies

To date, wind data have been collected and analysed for more than three years from 3 weather stations installed in the airport zone. IADC's associated meteorologists at the E.T. Joshua Airport and in Venezuela continue to analyse these data. The results so far show that there is **no significant** crosswind component to necessitate the construction of a crosswind runway. However, these studies will continue for the duration of the construction phase.

New Windward Highway/Bypass road

Work on the 3-kilometre Argyle bypass road and bridge is nearing completion. This road is scheduled to be completed by end of June 2009.

Upgrade of Stubbs-Rawacou-Argyle Road

The IADC has also now started improvement works on the Stubbs-Rawacou-Argyle road. This road, which traverses the Southern end of the runway and terminates in Argyle near to Corner Rock, is being widened and paved to provide proper access to persons living on the Eastern side of the airport, and to persons visiting the recreational pond at Rawacou.

Environmental monitoring

As part of the process of implementing the proposals contained in the Kocks Consult environmental study of the airport project, IADC assigned an in-house Environmental Auditor to lead a team of professionals drawn from other government agencies and civic society organisations to put together and implement an Environmental Monitoring Plan. The role of this Environmental Monitoring Team is to ensure that adequate measures are put in place and the engineering work plans are designed and executed in a manner to mitigate all adverse consequences to the environment from the construction of the international airport.

On the request of the government, the Cuban Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) has agreed to assist with our environmental monitoring, as well as conduct additional studies and train our officials to implement the monitoring plans. During the period January 20th to February 3rd, a two member team from CITMA conducted some geology and hydrology studies in the areas of Yambou, Rawacou and Peruvian Vale. These studies were done to provide additional information to the project and to propose solutions to some outstanding issues for the airport project.

IADC also welcomed the Cuban ornithologists in January for a 6 week period, during which time they conducted studies on the diversity of the birds, and their abundance and densities within the airport zone. This initial study will be followed by other studies during this year. The objective of these studies is to make a proper assessment of (a) the impact of the airport project on the wild life population, (b) the likely impact of birds on airport operations, and (c) a plan to address both of these impacts.

Preservation of our national heritage

IADC and the National Trust continue to work on the implementation of a Cultural Heritage Plan proposed by the National Trust and funded by the IADC in the amount of EC\$460,000.

As part of this plan, a team of Canadian archaeologists, led by Joe Moravetz, did extensive excavations in an area within the airport zone at Escape, Argyle. During those excavations a lot of pottery and other artefacts, several post holes, and 22 skeletons all believed dating back 2000 years ago were discovered. Although the findings are still to be carbon tested, the lead archaeologist Joe Moravetz noted that the style of some of the pottery discovered is indicative of the saladoid, a pottery style associated with the Arawaks who first came to St Vincent, while some are reflective of the Suazey, produced by the Caribs some 1500 years ago. These artefacts are now in the possession of the National Trust and will undoubtedly become a part of our understanding of our pre-Colombian history.

Next month, another group of archaeologists from Leiden University in Holland which has indicated an interest in doing some archaeological excavations at another site in Argyle will begin work in collaboration with the National Trust and the IADC. It is felt that this site is rich in Cayo complex, which forms the least well-known, but most intriguing ceramic assemblage known from the Lesser Antilles.

Apart from allowing us a better understanding of our forebears and ourselves, these excavations will help to promote St. Vincent and the Grenadines to visitors as a rich cultural centre and add to the development of our tourism product.

Roman Catholic Church, Cemetery and Shrine

IADC continues to work with both the Roman Catholic Community and the Ministry of Health with the relocation of the RC Church, Cemetery and Shrine to a 4 acre plot of land at Spring. The infrastructure works at this site is nearing completion. IADC has also recently concluded a contract with a local firm to provide assistance to the Ministry of Health with the actual exhumation of the remains of those interred at the Cemetery at Argyle and for the reburial of those remains at the new Roman Catholic cemetery at Spring/Peruvian Vale.

May 13th 2009.