



PR#052-25

PRESS RELEASE

Belmopan, April 17, 2025.

Today, Thursday, April 17, 2025, Tropic Air flight 9N711, a Cessna 208EX Grand Caravan carrying 15 passengers and one pilot, departed from Ranchito Airport in Corozal at approximately 8:00 AM en route to John Greif II Airport in San Pedro Town.

During the course of the flight, an unexpected and deeply troubling incident occurred, during which one passenger physically assaulted the pilot and forcibly sought to take control of the aircraft. The aircraft remained airborne for approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes before making a safe landing at Philip Goldson International Airport.

The pilot and two passengers sustained injuries during the ordeal and are currently receiving medical attention. They are expected to recover fully. Upon landing, the assailant sustained a fatal shot.

Belizean security forces responded swiftly and professionally. A formal investigation has been launched and is actively underway. The Department of Civil Aviation is working closely with the U.S. Embassy and other relevant authorities to ensure a comprehensive inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

This is an extraordinary and rare circumstance. While our domestic airspace is typically very secure — with over 120,000 flights operated safely each year — we acknowledge the seriousness of this incident and the concerns it raises.

We commend the pilot for his exceptional professionalism and composure in the face of a highly stressful situation. His actions undoubtedly safeguarded the lives of all on board. All passengers demonstrated remarkable bravery, and their efforts contributed to the positive outcome.

The Department of Civil Aviation has long maintained rigorous safety standards and risk management protocols. Although prior assessments indicated a low risk of unlawful interference within domestic operations, we recognize that no system is infallible. It is important to note that discussions to enhance airport security at domestic terminals were already in progress before this incident, including negotiations with specialized security service providers.

We understand the distress this incident may have caused and extend our heartfelt reassurance to the traveling public — both Belizeans and our international visitors — that safety remains our highest priority.

While there is currently no indication that this event is linked to any broader threat, we are taking decisive action. As a precaution and in the interest of public safety, enhanced security measures will be implemented across all domestic airports, effective immediately. These measures are designed to minimize disruption while strengthening protections for passengers, crew, and aircraft.

The Government of Belize is fully committed to maintaining a secure aviation environment and will continue working closely with both national and international partners to align our practices with the highest global safety standards.

We will continue to refine our security protocols in accordance with evolving international best practices.

Ends