

Hello, and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English!

I'm Jim Tedder in Washington.

United States officials recently fined Asiana Airlines \$500,000 for failing to help victims of a plane crash last year. Three people died and more than 180 were injured when the plane hit a seawall while landing in San Francisco, California. US officials say Asiana failed to act quickly to assist the families of passengers involved in the crash. An earlier investigation found the communications among the plane's crew members may have been an issue.

"Why would you have two pilots in the airplane if they aren't going to talk to each other?"

We will hear more about that later in the program. And we report on changes the South Korean airline is making in its training for pilots.

But first, we have a progress report on President Barack Obama's plan to increase the US military's presence in East Asia and the Pacific. Some officials have described the move as a "pivot" to the Asia-Pacific area.

"We have to do better at being able to communicate with each other in a way that allows us to not lead to miscalculation that won't be productive in the security environment."

We are talking about pivots and pilots today on As It Is from VOA Learning English.

US Military Continues "Pivot" to Asia-Pacific Area

Two years ago, President Obama announced plans to redirect America's defense policy. He said the military would reduce its presence in the Middle East, and instead send more forces to the Asia-Pacific area. But the US military is now facing tests from China and its growing military power.

US military officials say American influence in the Asia-Pacific area is not growing weaker. But recent actions by China show that influence is being tested. China's military has established an aircraft identification zone over the East China Sea. And in a recent incident, Chinese and US navy ships almost crashed into one another.

The Obama administration wants to move US forces from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the Asia-Pacific area. But China has been building up its forces in the Pacific. It has sent a new aircraft carrier to the area, and developed new missile technology.

Admiral Samuel Locklear is the commander of US forces in the Pacific. He says American and Chinese forces will likely increase their dealings with one another in the area. So he thinks the two militaries should increase their contacts.

Defense experts question whether the American pivot to Asia has, in fact, resulted in a strengthening of forces in the Pacific. Barry Pavel is with the Atlantic Council in Washington, DC.

"We have the deployment of 2,500 or so Marines to northern Australia, that'll be there on a routine basis, not a very big nor significant deployment in my estimation. There's a couple of ships. I think they were littoral combat ships that were discussed as being home ported in Singapore, and then there really hasn't been anything else."

The US military has deployed a combat ship to Singapore. And it sent the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan to replace another carrier at Yokosuka in Japan.

American officials say they could add more ships, equipment, and troops in the future.

But last month, the Obama administration announced plans to cut the US military to its smallest size since the end of World War II. Experts say that could affect any future military moves in the Asia-Pacific area.

You are listening to As It Is. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington.

We now turn to our story about Asiana, South Korea's second-largest passenger airline. The company is changing its training for pilots in an effort to persuade crews to talk more openly. Steve Ember has our report.

Asiana Airlines Makes Changes in Pilot Training

Asiana Airlines wants to improve communication in the airplane's cockpit – the enclosed area where pilots sit. An American investigation found that cockpit culture and pilot training may have been an issue in the crash of an Asiana plane last July.

"Tower, good morning. Asiana 214 on final, seven miles south..."

Asiana Flight 214, a Boeing 777, crash landed short of the runway at the San Francisco International Airport in California.

Radio Communication: "Everybody calling, stand by..."

Three people died and 180 others were hurt.

Tower Controller: "United 885, roger, we have emergency vehicles responding."

United Airlines Employee: "Between the runways, right adjacent to the [runway] numbers, we can see about two or three people that are moving and apparently survived."

Controller: "Roger."

Last August, VOA was the first media organization to report that the crash could be linked to the way pilots treat each other in the cockpit.

Usually, when such issues happen, it is a matter of pilots not wishing to question a decision, which they feel to be dangerous, when made by the captain, or senior pilot.

But the Asiana crash resulted from a different kind of failure to communicate.

The US National Transportation Safety Board held a hearing on it in December.

Investigators said the pilot making the landing was being trained by a more experienced "Triple-7" pilot, and was afraid to tell his training pilot that he wanted to cancel the landing and try again. This was because Korean culture would not have allowed him to speak up, even though cockpit alarms were sounding, warning that the plane was at too low a speed and not correctly positioned for landing.

Now, Asiana Airlines is changing the way it trains pilots. The company will urge more open discussion among pilots about flying decisions. Pilots will depend less on years working for the company, military service or age.

David Kirstein works in aviation regulatory law for Kirstein and Young, a Washington-based law group.

"Why would you have two pilots in the airplane if they aren't going to talk to each other?"

He also says the new training does not surprise him.

"There's probably pressure from US aviation officials, or the NTSB, or their own government. There may be a fall-off in traffic that consumers are worried about if people aren't flying. I mean that's the most motivating factor there is."

While many airlines have already put in place "Cockpit Resource Management," the idea of open communication in the cockpit, the head of



Asiana Airlines has admitted that many of their pilots work and fly within a strict military order.

David Kirstein says other airlines should note the changes at Asiana. He says they also should understand the importance of open communication in the cockpit.

I'm Steve Ember.

Thank you, Steve.

We would like to know what you want to hear about on a future program. Just send us a letter or a postcard. Our address is:

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