

Etobicoke firm develops new flight-monitoring technology

By JOANNA LAVOIE
Guardian Staff

An Etobicoke aviation technology firm is garnering international attention for thinking outside the "black" box.

Star Navigation Systems Group Ltd., led by CEO and Chairman Viraf Kapadia, is reaching new heights in the aviation industry for the development of the first real time in-flight safety monitoring system (ISMS).

"Everyone has thought about it but no one has put it into action," said Kapadia just days before heading to Singapore to market his product.

"We are selling safety free of cost. My role in the aviation industry is to provide safety measures that are cost effective."

Essentially, Star Navigation's ISMS system uses satellite transmissions to continually track and analyze data from various data points within an aircraft.

The information is then processed into a readable English format and transmitted to Star Navigation's ground station.

The system can also be configured to immediately send an alert to key individuals anywhere on the planet by pager, text message, email or phone, should an abnormality or incident take place.

"Current legacy systems inform pilots of an incident after it happens, which is reactive...but our system is constantly hunting for differences, sudden changes from the norm in the form of spikes or alerts," said Kapadia.

With a price tag starting at about \$250,000 per system, Kapadia said the cost of the ISMS is equivalent to the price of one cancelled flight.

"The system pays for itself," added Kapadia, noting the fleet maintenance advantages of the system.

Former International Air Transport Association and Air Canada CEO Pierre Jeannot, chairs Star Navigation's strategic advisory

committee.

Jeannot, who helped develop the black box voice and data flight recorder over 40 years ago, said he sees a lot of potential for Star Navigation's new technology.

"When (Star Navigation) came to see me I was quite intrigued and I said 'this is what the industry needs'," said Jeannot from his Montreal office.

Citing concerns about the difficulty of recovering black box data when the device is submerged in water, loses electrical power or gets damaged by fire, Jeannot said in an October 2004 release that the black box recorder is obsolete.

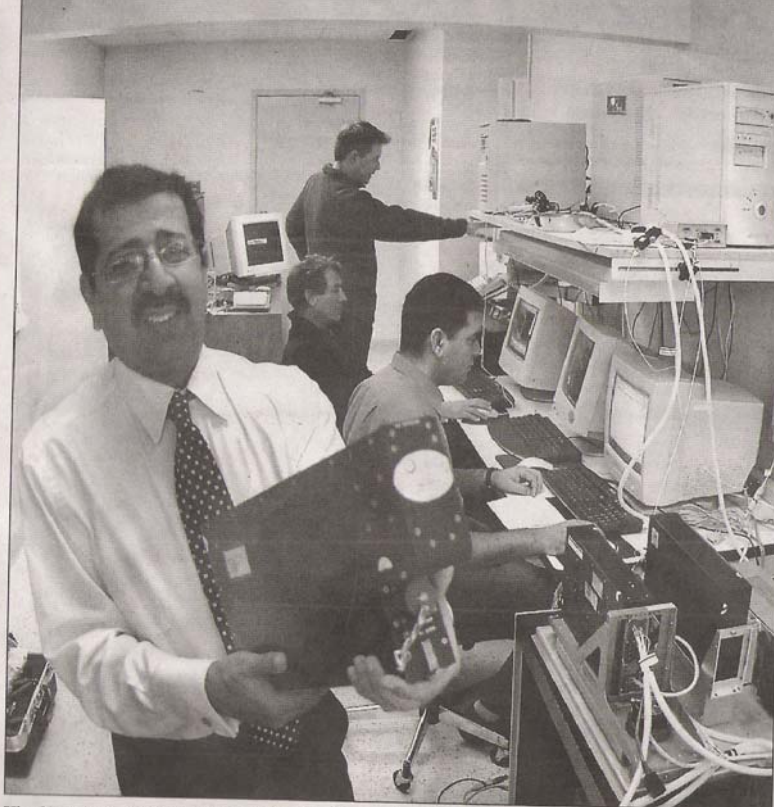
"There have been a lot of changes

in the industry and it was helpful in a number of ways. We need to move on to something new," said Jeannot, noting satellite technology is now much more affordable than it was just 10 years ago.

"Star (Navigation) has a great deal of potential. They're progressive and they know what they're doing."

Armed with such a positive endorsement, Kapadia said he's now seeking support for his Canadian-developed product throughout Europe and soon expects to move into the North American market.

For more information, visit www.star-navigation.com



Viraf Kapadia, chairman and CEO of Star Navigation Systems Group, holds the new inflight safety monitoring system his company has developed.