



International Civil Aviation Organization

The Second Meeting of the APANPIRG ATM Sub-Group (ATM/SG/2)

Hong Kong, China, 04 – 08 August 2014

Agenda Item 6: AOP, MET, AIM, SAR

SEARCH AND RESCUE COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

(Presented by the United States of America)

SUMMARY

A near-term conclusion from the ICAO Special Meeting on Global Flight Tracking held in Montreal, 12-13 May 2014, was: “ICAO should increase its resources allocated to Search and Rescue in order to improve the effectiveness across national and regional boundaries”. This paper, based on review of numerous SAR incidents, discusses how SAR effectiveness across national and regional boundaries can be vastly improved by addressing SAR cooperation and coordination issues within a State and also internationally. The unique aspects of the Malaysia flight MH 370 may create new questions for SAR to consider.

This paper relates to –

Strategic Objectives:

A: *Safety* – Enhance global civil aviation safety

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A near-term conclusion from the Special Meeting on Global Flight Tracking held in Montreal, 12-13 May 2014, was: “ICAO should increase its resources allocated to Search and Rescue in order to improve the effectiveness across national and regional boundaries”. To its credit, the ICAO Bangkok Regional Office had already begun effort to address this concern, particularly with its Asia/Pacific SAR Task Force (APSAR/TF). And, experience gained in response to the disappearance of Malaysia flight MH 370 will likely create new questions for SAR authorities to consider.

1.2 Based on reports from numerous SAR incidents and discussions in various SAR forums, a common failure leading to ineffective SAR response across national and regional boundaries and SAR regions has been lack of cooperation and coordination. This lack of cooperation and coordination is often seen between aeronautical and maritime agencies as well as between civil and military agencies within the national government and internationally with other involved States.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Good cooperation and coordination needs to be in place prior to the SAR incident. This also requires trust and confidence in the other person, agency, State or organization. It is recognized that building this trust and confidence requires time and effort, both of which may take longer than most of us would like to take. It is also recognized that a major SAR incident does not happen every day, however, a State must be prepared to react to the receipt of a distress alert and be able to coordinate an effective response as needed.

2.2 Improvement in SAR cooperation and coordination is very dependent on each State and each situation. But, history has shown that some concerns and issues are widespread and include:

- a) A national SAR committee is essential to make efficient and effective use of a State's own resources. Members would be national-level agencies including the military and various civil agencies. (The APSAR TF has proposed a SAR Coordinating Committee Agreement template.)
- b) Civil aviation and maritime agencies should develop a sense of mutual support, not competitors for SAR budget and staffs.
- c) Most States rely on the military to be a primary responder for SAR. Clear understanding between the military and civil sides of the government will begin to limit confusion on issues such as facilities being used for more than just defense, who pays for the added cost for fuel and related supplies used in responding, coordination within a civilian framework, SAR response with neighboring States, military concern about classified message traffic and sensitivity of positions/locations of their units being broadcast, etc.
- d) Agreements are needed to define the SAR region and to strengthen SAR cooperation and coordination with neighboring States. States with maritime regions would need to ensure that aeronautical and maritime agencies have a clear understanding on response to aircraft incidents in the water. Agreements could be bilateral or multilateral. (The APSAR TF has proposed a SAR Agreement template.)
- e) Clear understanding of what is meant by a SAR region. Permission is not needed to enter a SAR region which is beyond a State's territorial sea. But, ships and aircraft responding to assist in a SAR incident should coordinate with the designated SAR Mission Coordinator so as to help the search effort, not to hinder it.
- f) The role of the rescue coordination center (RCC) for being the focal point of SAR operations, particularly for coordinating with other States and RCCs.
- g) How to determine when search and rescue changes to search and recovery or when to terminate the SAR effort.
- h) Issues regarding a SAR incident becoming a law enforcement case or accident investigation case. SAR is often the first response but it can be distracted by other types of concerns happening at the same time as SAR.
- i) Handling of news media and social media.
- j) Assistance to accident victims and their families.
- k) Handling of involvement of foreign governments (on behalf of their citizens, for providing SAR response, etc.)
- l) Development of a process to implement lessons learned, recommendations and findings from actual SAR incidents and exercises.
- m) Understanding that exercises can provide great benefit, particularly for the less frequent incident (e.g., aircraft accident in the water).
- n) The need to sustain the effort to maintain the trust and confidence.

2.3 The points stated are just some of the many concerns which benefit from good cooperation and coordination within a government, and with neighboring States. Some of the points could be handled by conducting periodic regional SAR workshops. For example, the ICAO Mexico City Regional Office covered many of these topics in its *SAR and Civil/Military Coordination Seminar*, 26- 30 May 2014.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to consider the information contained in this paper as a means to further improve SAR effectiveness across national and regional boundaries and SAR regions by enhancing cooperation and coordination in the Asia/Pacific region.

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