



International civil aviation organization

COM CO-ORDINATION MEETING
(Afghanistan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan)

16 – 17 December 2014, New Delhi, India



Agenda Item 1: Review outcome of relevant meetings

**OUTCOME OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE AD HOC AFGHANISTAN
CONTINGENCY GROUP (AHACG/2)**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This papers presents the outcome of the AHACG/2 held on 17-19 November 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey and the outcome of the high-level Meeting on Afghanistan Airspace Contingency Planning (HLAAC) held on 28th November in Hong Kong, China.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group (AHACG/2) was held at Istanbul, Turkey from 17 to 19 November 2014. The meeting was attended by 49 participants from Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, India, I. R. Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Singapore, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, USA, IATA, IFALPA, NATO, ISAF/AFCENT, and EUROCONTROL.

The papers presented to the meeting and meeting report is provided at the following webpage:
<http://www.icao.int/APAC/Meetings/Pages/2014-AHACG2.aspx>

1.2 The First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group Meeting (AHACG/1, Kuala Lumpur, 11-12 September 2014). A high-level Meeting on Afghanistan Airspace Contingency Planning (HLAAC) was held in Hong Kong China on 28th November 2014.

1.3 The HLAAC meeting reviewed the outcome of the AHACG/2 meeting and identified the vital steps ahead that could act as barriers as follows:

- 17 December 2014 – start of the ‘bridging contract (extension of the current Air Navigation Service Provider);
- 01 January 2015 – Afghanistan CAA budget approval (USD 25 million, note: the Airspace Control Authority may not pass to the Afghanistan government at this time);
- 28 February 2015 – Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) contract (renewal or new provider – IATA agreed to discuss the situation with VSAT vendors and Afghanistan, and report back to ICAO);

- 01 April 2015 – Last plausible date for the long term Air Navigation Service (ANS) contract to be signed;
- 30 June 2015 – possible finish of the ANS extension (dependent on daily cost of service provision);
- 01 July 2015 – execution of Afghanistan Contract.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group (AHACG/1) was informed that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) had requested the current ANS contract with IAP Worldwide Services to be extended by three months through the Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (ACAA).

2.2 The AHACG/2 meeting noted that a contract extension of between six and nine months was being offered by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and United States Air Force Central Command (AFCENT). This was intended to bridge the gap from the day the current arrangements that were due to expire on 15 December 2014 until a new arrangement could be put in place. The meeting was informed that the inter-agency agreement had been signed.

2.3 Regarding the medium and longer term, funding the extension of the current contract with the existing ANS Provider (ANSP) only delayed a decision on whether to engage a new ANSP or to temporarily delegate ANS responsibilities to another State. The AHACG/1 meeting had noted that a delegated ANSP could provide the ANS remotely, using High Frequency (HF), Automatic Dependent Surveillance – Contract (ADS-C) and Controller Pilot Data Link Communications (CPDLC) or High Frequency (HF). However, Afghanistan stated at the AHACG/2 meeting that the option of delegated ANS was not being currently considered.

2.4 The following updates were provided of the potential contingency schemes being focussed on by the AHACG (refer to the AHACG/1 report for the full list of scenarios):

- **Scenario B:** *Kabul Flight Information Region (FIR) Contingency Services* – no ATC service but upper airspace is not affected by military or security concerns, and a number of restrictions are applied (IATA reported that a number of airlines indicated to them that they would prefer to divert around the Kabul FIR if there were no ATC services);
- **Scenario C:** *Iranian Airspace Routes* – routing via Iranian airspace due to a number of ‘hot spots’ in Syrian, Iraq and European airspace using a high density Organized Track System (OTS) – this scenario is discussed in AHACG/2/WP/05; and
- **Scenario E:** *ATS route L888 – via China* for some Southeast and East Asian traffic, routing north of the Himalayas via RNAV 10 route L888 (there had been no feedback from China since AHACG/1 on capacity and CNS capability to support an increase in operations on this alternative routing, but there was agreement at the AHACG/2 meeting to improve routing options within Tajikistan airspace, as discussed in the Tajikistan presentation under Agenda Item 3).

2.5 The meeting discussed about the Flight Plan and Communications Issues in Afghanistan (WP/03)

2.5.1 The ICAO MID Office presented information on flight plan distribution problems experienced with Afghanistan. A Mission by the ICAO APAC Regional Office to Kabul, Afghanistan in June 2014 also noted a number of problems concerning the flight plan distribution and aeronautical communications, including:

- the briefing office was using ageing tools;
- the AFTN line performed poorly in the considered period; and
- flight plan submission and distribution processed mixed exchanges of emails/ Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunication Network (AFTN) messages, paper copies, with a number of duplicated inputs by operators.

2.5.2 It was noted that a CADAS system – a solution providing messaging services for aeronautical offices, airlines and pilots – was installed but not operationally used. The system apparently complied with the ICAO Aeronautical Message Handling System (AMHS) standards and could probably contribute quickly to the improvement of flight plan submission and distribution processes. It was noted by Afghanistan that a means of effectively handling flight plans was necessary to support current ATS and any contingency situation.

2.5.3 An APANPIRG Deficiency between Afghanistan and Pakistan remain a problem. There was a lack of reliability in the aeronautical fixed services including data communication between Kabul and Karachi and ATS voice communication between Lahore and Kabul ACCs.

2.5.4 A Communications Coordination Meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India was planned by ICAO for 16-17 December 2014 at New Delhi, India. Iran requested to be sent an invitation to this meeting.

2.5.5 Iran reported to the ICAO MID Regional Office that a Very Small Aperture (VSAT) connection between Kabul and Tehran was previously operational but was not functioning on the Afghanistan side. Within Afghanistan, internal communications were provided by two different VSAT networks: one for voice and data communications and another one for surveillance. While the VSAT network supporting the Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast Wide Area Multilateration (ADS/B WAM) had been shut down, most of the VSAT network supporting the Very High Frequency (VHF) radio coverage was operating except at Chaghcharan, Ghazni and Salerno.

2.6 It was informed that the ACAA was meeting with the President of Afghanistan soon, and he would decide on contract and training options. ISAF had assessed USD 200 million as a fair price over a five year period for the ANSP contract (which included the provision of ATS). The Afghanistan Ministry of Finance had approved USD 25 million as the ACAA budget for 2015.

Europe-Asia Major Traffic Flow Contingency Planning (WP/04)

2.7 ATA introduced a concept to maintain Afghanistan upper airspace as open in the event that ANS services were not able to be provided, using a combination of procedures and restrictions such in-flight emergency ATS route changes to simplify the route structure, extended longitudinal spacing and traffic metering, and traffic broadcasts by aircraft (Scenario B). It was emphasised that a contingency plan was necessary for events that might be quite unrelated to the ANS contract, and thus the planning effort was needed as a matter of urgency, even before the current contract expired.

2.8 The meeting underlined that in the case of no ANS provision the airspace would not even meet the requirements of class G (uncontrolled) airspace, which required the provision of flight information and alerting services. IFALPA stressed that they would not recommend that their members operate in airspace without any ATS, especially as it was a conflict zone with potential civil/military issues from piloted and unpiloted aircraft, and ordnance. ICAO would provide assistance to Afghanistan with advice regarding the appropriate airspace classification if necessary.

2.9 ICAO stressed that as a sovereign State, the contingency plan for Afghanistan airspace was a matter for the GIRoA, which would be noted within the overall contingency scheme being discussed by the AHACG that dealt mainly with actions to be taken if the Kabul FIR was not available. The meeting noted that Afghanistan would have to accommodate arrival/departure operations from Afghanistan aerodromes. The meeting emphasised that any State contingency measures must take into account the lower airspace as well as the access to and from designated international airports within the Kabul FIR.

2.10 Afghanistan advised that it was their intention to provide familiarisation training for their local controllers so that they could provide basic contingency services (flight following, communication and other assistance that did not amount to an ATS).

2.11 There was also a discussion on the ATS Interfacility Data link Communications (AIDC) between Karachi-Ahmadabad ACCs (AIDC between Karachi and Delhi as well as Bombay ACC is not possible at the moment as an upgrade to AIDC Version 3.0 would be a pre-requisite).

2.12 Some other actions recommended included the following:

- ensure that the contract related to the VSAT was extended before February 2015;
- establish an appropriate flight plan handling system;
- install at least one HF station or other suitable means to be used as backup in case of VSAT failure; and
- ensure the availability of adequate aeronautical meteorological and aeronautical search and rescue services.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to note the information provided in this paper.
