



**Thirteenth Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Air Navigation Planning
and Implementation Regional Group (APANPIRG/13)**

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Agenda Item 2.4: Other air navigation matters

**ICAO ASIA/PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE SUPPORT
FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION TO AFGHANISTAN**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This working paper presents information on support provided by ICAO Asia/Pacific Regional Office for technical cooperation to Afghanistan for the period 28 December 2001 to 17 July 2002.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Afghanistan has been subjected to 23 years of armed conflict, which has caused major destruction to the country's infrastructure and subjected its people to significant deprivation. The prolonged state of unrest and conflict in Afghanistan has had a disastrous effect on the civil aviation infrastructure, leading to widespread destruction or serious damage to air navigation facilities and services. Following the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, military action, Operation Enduring Freedom, by the Coalition Forces commenced on 7 October, 2001 in Afghanistan against the Al Qaeda terrorist organization and the ruling Taliban regime. On 16 December 2001 the Taliban was removed from the government of Afghanistan. The Coalition Forces campaign continues to eliminate the remains of the terrorist forces.

1.2 The United Nations peace talks on Afghanistan took place in Bonn, Germany, from 27 November to 5 December 2001. The Bonn Conference resulted in the creation of the Afghanistan Interim Administration in Kabul to govern Afghanistan from 22 December 2001 for a six month period to fill the power vacuum left by the Taliban's collapse. The Interim Administration was replaced by a Transitional Authority established by a Loya Jirga (national assembly) held at Kabul from 10 to 16 June 2002 and will govern for the next 18 months and be replaced by an elected government.

1.3 The rebuilding of Afghanistan and large scale humanitarian relief efforts are underway assisted by United Nation agencies and Non-Government Organizations. ICAO at the request of the Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Afghanistan is participating in the rehabilitation of civil aviation.

2. ICAO FACT-FINDING MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN

2.1 Mr. Abdul Jabber Arifi, Acting Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism on 10 December 2001 requested ICAO to carry out an immediate evaluation of existing conditions and requirements for the rehabilitation of civil aviation and resumption of air navigation systems and services in Afghanistan.

2.2 The Technical Cooperation Bureau (TCB) undertook the mission to Afghanistan from 28 December 2001 to 3 January 2002. The mission was carried out by the Deputy Director TCB and a Regional Officer ATM from the Asia/Pacific and Middle East Regional Offices.

2.3 The mission took into account two previous assessment missions carried out by TCB on 8-22 August 1995 and 8-22 September 2000. Both these missions had reported that the civil aviation infrastructure was seriously deficient and in urgent need of rehabilitation. In 1995 it was reported that “the present situation in Afghanistan and especially the most recent military activities have had a disastrous effect on the country’s civil aviation infrastructure”.

2.4 Recognizing that the reconstruction of the civil aviation infrastructure and the provision of air navigation services was essential to the rehabilitation of the Afghanistan economy and social order, ICAO gave the highest priority on obtaining accurate and up-to-date information on the situation, and to reassure the Afghan authorities of ICAO’s willingness to provide all possible assistance to restore civil aviation services in Afghanistan.

2.5 Also, high priority was given to reopening the Afghanistan airspace (Kabul Flight Information Region (FIR)) to international civil overflights, which would generate urgently required returns. Following the events of 11 September, the Afghanistan airspace was closed to international civil flights operating between Europe and Asia. As a consequence, these flights had to circumnavigate the Kabul FIR resulting in longer flight times and significant increase in operating cost. Prior to the closure of the Kabul FIR, approximately 170 overflights operated through the Kabul FIR each day generating an annual revenue from air navigation charges of about US\$12 million.

2.6 At the completion of the Kabul mission, a meeting was held with representatives of the Coalition Forces at Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) to discuss the opening of the Kabul FIR to international civil flights at the earliest opportunity. Subsequently, the Coalition Forces delegated three ATS routes, V888, V838 and A466 between FL 310-390 to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism for international civil aircraft to transit through the Kabul FIR. These routes were opened on 15 February 2002 as Class F airspace and an air traffic advisory service was provided by the Flight Information Centre (FIC) at Kabul Airport. Since then, two more routes, V876 and V500 have been opened and approximately 70 flights a day are now overflying the Kabul FIR.

2.7 The mission held discussions with officials of MOCAT and UN agencies to obtain up-to-date information on civil aviation and related developments in Afghanistan. The Kabul International Airport was inspected to assess the condition and serviceability of essential airport services, and to identify the areas in which assistance could be immediately provided to alleviate the existing situation. In particular, the VSAT system, which had been implemented in 1999 under a project by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), provided almost nationwide VHF radio communications for ATS. Also, the VSAT system provided AFTN links and direct speech channels with adjacent Area Control Centres (ACCs) and direct speech between the domestic airports in the network. The VSAT system is essential for operation of the overflight routes for international flights. The FIC had been rehabilitated under the IATA project and was found to be in an acceptable operational condition once the power supply was fully restored.

2.8 The mission visited the MOCAT remote communications station located on Koh Asmayee Hill approximately 15 kms West of Kabul Airport and 300 meter above ground level. Housed at the site were the UHF radio link equipment and VHF transceivers for the extended range en-route frequency (128.5 MHz) relayed to the FIC. This was also the site of the en-route VOR/DME, which had been destroyed in the late 1980s. The communications site was seriously damaged, however the radio equipment had been previously removed to the airport and it would be possible to reinstate the equipment in a temporary building on Koh Asmayee.

2.9 Of particular concern was the lack of trained and qualified personnel in all disciplines. Training of new recruits and updating the skills of the existing personnel was of the highest priority. The MOCAT Civil Aviation Training Centre (CATC) had been substantially damaged and lacked all basic equipment.

2.10 The mission confirmed the findings of the previous ICAO missions and noted further deterioration in all areas of civil aviation functions. The VSAT system and the FIC were not operational but could be brought back to partial service in the short term. Subsequently in February, IATA with the assistance of NORTEL (VSAT supplier) partially reinstated the system at Kabul, Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. However, the Kandahar station serving the southern area of the country required major repairs.

2.11 The mission reported the urgency of commencing the rehabilitation of civil aviation, which would play a key role in delivering and distributing humanitarian aid, reconstruction materials and generating much needed revenue from overflight and landing charges. In consultation with MOCAT, ICAO was requested to continue to provide technical assistance and to assist with the preparation and implementation of civil aviation rehabilitation projects. Following this mission, ICAO prepared a rehabilitation project for civil aviation in Afghanistan in two phases.

3. FOLLOW-UP MISSIONS

3.1 The Asia/Pacific Office was requested to carry out a follow-up mission to facilitate the establishment of the ICAO rehabilitation project and to provide technical assistance to MOCAT for its ongoing operations. Due to difficulties in obtaining funding for the project and issues concerning the arrangements with the Interim Administration, the implementation of the project was delayed. Without a project in place, ICAO would not have full time experts available and the Bangkok Office was asked to continue to provide support to MOCAT. This mission was extended and covered the period from 26 January to 28 August 2002, during which time the following missions were undertaken:

26 January – 19 February
3 March – 9 April
22 April – 8 May
23 May – 16 July
24 – 28 August

Rehabilitation projects

3.2 The Interim Administration had established the Afghanistan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA) to assist Government ministries plan and implement reconstruction projects for Afghanistan. The approach taken was to empower the ministries to manage the rehabilitation requirements in their respective areas of responsibility. Funding for projects was expected to be provided mainly from donations provided by States in line with undertakings made at the Tokyo Donor Conference on Reconstruction of Afghanistan held from 21 to 22 January 2002. The 61 donor nations and the World Bank pledged \$1.8 billion in fiscal 2002 as part of a \$4.5 billion commitment over the next five years. It was expected that funding for immediate rehabilitation needs would be provided by the World Bank who was working closely with the AACA. Also, ICAO had initiated an effort to seek funding for civil aviation from Contracting States but to date no funding has been obtained.

3.3 As ICAO had been invited by MOCAT to assist and participate in their rehabilitation effort, a mission by TCB in early March presented the \$38 million civil aviation rehabilitation project to the AACA. Subsequently, it became evident through discussions with the AACA that this amount of funding would not be available. It was decided to scale down the project and the first phase would only deal with the immediate requirements to rehabilitate Kabul International Airport sufficient to

enable international civil airlines to operate. Accordingly, MOCAT and ICAO jointly prepared a \$8.2 million project which became the main focus of the mission.

3.4 After sustained discussions and negotiations with the AACA, progress was made when the Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism signed a Management Service Agreement with ICAO at Montreal on 30 May 2002 for ICAO to implement the project for the rehabilitation of the immediate requirements for Kabul International Airport on 1 July 2002. Further detailed discussions were held with the AACA to resolve difficulties concerning financial and implementation arrangements. At the request of the Minister of Finance, a TCB mission visited Kabul from 23 to 25 August and resolved outstanding issues and implementation of the project is pending.

3.5 While the negotiations on the Kabul Airport project were progressing, the condition of the five major provincial airports with paved runways, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kundoz, and Mazar-i-Sharif and two principal airstrips, Bamyan and Faizabad was of major concern, especially in view of the concentrated effort to improve conditions at Kabul Airport. Therefore, MOCAT assisted by the mission undertook a needs assessment of these airports from 7 to 19 June 2002. Subsequently, ICAO prepared a project for approximately US\$8 million for the rehabilitation of the immediate operational requirements, which was submitted to the AACA for funding. To date, no funding has been obtained for the project and donor support is being sought.

3.6 It should be noted that both the Kabul Airport and provincial airports projects did not include funding for rehabilitation of runway surfaces, power supply and distribution systems, and airport buildings. With limited funding available, priority was given to provide immediate operational requirements for the operation of airport essential services such as air traffic and safety services. All airport runways are in poor condition and in urgent need of resurfacing. Running repairs are being made to patch up the runways to keep them operational. Major repairs are required and ongoing operations are causing further deterioration.

Department for International Development Quick Impact Project for Kabul Airport

3.7 In February, the mission successfully concluded discussions with the Department for International Development (DfID), United Kingdom to obtain funding of \$285,000 for a quick impact project to provide essential safety and operational equipment for Kabul Airport. The implementation of this project was completed in early August and the equipment provided included: an 8 ft high security fence around the civil parking apron, 3 vehicles for airport operations, an x-ray machine for hand baggage, a passenger archway metal detector, mobile radio system for ground operations, 5 trolley mounted fire extinguishers, six baggage trolleys, 2 low profile tractors, a security pass photographic system, two 10 KVA generators, two desktop computers with displays and printers, and an internet satellite service with a network installed at the MOCAT Headquarters and Kabul Airport operations block.

3.8 DfID also contributed to improvements to Kabul Airport passenger terminal building and restoration of the Civil Aviation Training Centre building. The assistance from DfID has been the only source of direct assistance provided to MOCAT to date.

Other assistance to MOCAT and the UN

3.9 Whilst the establishment of rehabilitation projects are of primary importance, providing technical assistance to MOCAT including Kabul Airport for day to day operations was also a high priority. The lack of expertise at all levels of the Ministry's operation led to significant constraints in providing civil aviation services. In particular, the lack of communications was a major problem, which was partly overcome by the ICAO mission being able to make use of UN facilities in Kabul.

3.10 In addition, the UN is the primary provider of civil passenger and cargo flights in Afghanistan and air services are operated by the World Food Programme (WFP) UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) based in Islamabad, Pakistan and the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) based in Kabul. With the UN flight operations providing essential air services not only in support of UN requirements but also for the Afghanistan IA, the ICAO mission provided essential coordination between the UN and MOCAT on civil aviation matters. The mission was also invited as an observer on the Board of Directors of UNHAS.

Human resources

3.11 Whilst the collapse of Afghanistan's civil aviation facilities and infrastructure is of major proportion, the impact on human resources has been equally devastating. There is an urgent need to implement training programmes across the board and to provide training facilities and equipment. Formal technical training stopped many years ago and existing personnel need training to upgrade their skills and be brought up to date. The mission was able, with the assistance of UNESCO, to provide two UN Volunteer English teachers to teach 30 students at the Civil Aviation Training Centre in elementary and intermediate English.

3.12 In July, the mission assisted a delegation from the Director General of Civil Aviation, France to assess the training needs for air traffic controllers with a view to offering ten training places for MOCAT trainee controllers at the French ATC training institute in Toulouse. Six candidates out of eighteen applicants were identified as meeting the English requirements and further assessments would be required before training places could be offered.

Military liaison

3.13 Under current arrangements, the control authority for the Kabul FIR and airports in Afghanistan remains with the Coalition Forces. This led to a need to establish close coordination with the Coalition Forces to accommodate the requirements of civil aviation.

3.14 As Kabul Airport is the primary gateway to Afghanistan, and the only airport that can handle international flights, the mission provided coordination between MOCAT, the UN flight operations and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the military authority responsible for providing the air traffic and airport fire services at Kabul Airport. Regular weekly meeting were held on airport operational matters.

3.15 In regard to the airspace, the Coalition Forces operates a Regional Air Movements Control Centre (RAMCC) from their base in Qatar. This provides a slot control system that regulates the number and frequency of aircraft movements to airports in Afghanistan. At present a restriction of six aircraft movements per hour in and out of Kabul Airport is applied. The military are not providing an air traffic service for the airspace and civil aircraft are restricted to daylight operations under visual flight rules. The mission established close liaison with the Coalition Liaison Officer in Kabul to represent the interests of civil aviation.

De-mining coordination

3.16 As a result of the many military conflicts over two decades, there are a substantial number of mines placed all over Afghanistan posing a major hazard to the population. De-mining activities are a major programme being carried out by the UN and NGOs. In regard to civil airports, mines and unexploded ordnance are a major hazard at all airports. In the Coalition Forces air campaign against Afghanistan that began in early October, according to UN officials some 244,420 sub-munitions were used. The UN Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan (MAPA) initial ground assessments indicated that, at a minimum, about 10 percent of the sub-munitions - about 24,442 - have failed to explode and are lying on the ground. The Kabul Airport perimeter is ringed by a defensive mine field and the airfield contains large numbers of unexploded ordnance which could take up to 18 months to clear.

3.17 The mission established close links with MAPA and a plan was developed to clear the runway strip and end safety zones of hazardous materials. MAPA gave priority to surveying and clearing the airfield and up to five de-mining teams were working at the airport. The terminal and parking areas used by civil aviation have been declared safe and the situation on the airfield improves daily. Work is also ongoing at provincial airports and airstrips.

Bangkok Office resources

3.18 With the involvement of the Bangkok Office providing technical assistance to support the Afghanistan, the responsibility for technical cooperation support for Afghanistan was transferred by ICAO from the Cairo Office to the Bangkok Office in March 2002.

3.19 Due to the prolonged absence of the RO ATM from the Bangkok Office over a period of six months, the work of the ATM Section was placed under considerable constraints. In view of the major ATM implementation projects underway, such as RVSM and EMARSSH that are subject to time deadlines, assistance was requested from Air Services Australia to provide an ATM officer to assist the Bangkok Office. Air Services responded by assigning Mr. Ron Rigney for 12 weeks during the period February to July 2002 which was highly appreciated and greatly assisted the ATM work programme at a critical stage.

3.20 With the completion of negotiations for the implementation of the ICAO Kabul Airport rehabilitation project, and the pending permanent presence of an ICAO project team in Kabul, the Bangkok Office has terminated its mission to Kabul. However, the Bangkok Office continues to support ICAO's technical cooperation with Afghanistan to the extent possible.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The operation of civil aviation in Afghanistan is in a vulnerable state due to the lack of qualified and trained personnel, and the fragile condition of its airports and facilities. The Kabul International Airport rehabilitation project to be implemented by ICAO will provide urgently needed immediate improvements but will not address the major infrastructure needs to rebuild runways, utilities and buildings, and provide the human resources necessary for the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism to fully function. The provincial airports and airstrips essential to service the rest of Afghanistan where humanitarian needs are of the highest priority, especially in the mountainous areas with winter approaching, are not receiving any funding. In most cases there are no safety services and minimal civil aviation personnel. Without adequate funding and personnel, the recovery of Afghanistan civil aviation would be difficult to achieve.

4.2 ICAO has provided technical assistance to MOCAT for the past six months through the Bangkok Office, the cost of which has been borne by the organization. The ICAO project will strengthen this effort but to meet the longer term needs, the international community will need to make a commitment to rebuild civil aviation in Afghanistan, without which, further progress would be difficult, and there is a risk that the civil aviation system could collapse.

5. ACTION BY APANPIRG/13

5.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information above; and
- b) encourage States to contribute funding or in-kind support for civil aviation in Afghanistan, in particular to consider providing training assistance to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism.