



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

Bangkok, Thailand, 9 to 13 September 2002

Agenda Item 2.3: Results of ICAO Coordination Groups and related meetings

**SPECIAL COORDINATION MEETING
ON AFGHANISTAN AIRSPACE
(SCM/AFG)**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This working paper gives a summary of two Special Coordination Meetings on Afghanistan airspace, dealing with issues related to the events which took place within and around Afghanistan as a result of military operations by Coalition Forces after the tragic events of September 11 2001.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The meeting is advised that as a result of military operations by Coalition Forces which took place within and around Afghanistan after the tragic events of September 11 2001, special contingency procedures were introduced to facilitate international civil aircraft operating between Southeast and Southern Asia to the Middle East and Europe (CRAME).

1.2 The CRAME was developed on a phased approach with varying requirements depending on what airspace could be safely used by international civil aircraft. This plan was approved by the President of the ICAO Council and implemented on 19 October 2001.

1.3 The CRAME became very manageable to operate with slight amendments being addressed expeditiously as different scenarios were presented. It has to be recognised that the theatres of operations for military aircraft did not only affect Afghanistan but also adjacent States and the Arabian Sea, the latter having large amounts of military aircraft transiting through this area.

2. DISCUSSION

Special ATS Coordination Meeting on Afghanistan (SCM/AFG/1), Dubai, UAE –
9/10 May 2002

2.1 On 9-10 May 2002, a Special ATS Coordination Meeting between States concerned and the Coalition Forces, was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates under the auspices of ICAO. The purpose of the meeting was to review the present situation regarding the provision of Air Traffic Services within Afghanistan, including the authorization and promulgation of AIS (including NOTAM issue) and to develop a Contingency Air Traffic Management Plan (CATMP) for Transit of the Kabul FIR by International Civil Aircraft. The meeting was attended by Afghanistan, I.R. Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, United States of America, the Coalition Forces (CF) including the Regional Air

Movement Control Centre (RAMCC), United Nations Joint Logistics Centre, ICAO MID and APAC offices and the International Airline Transport Association (IATA).

2.2 This meeting was extremely productive and allowed all parties, to better understand the CF requirements with respect to Afghanistan and adjacent airspace. A revised NOTAM procedure was agreed to assist in identifying the lower airspace requirements and restrictions compared to ATS routes within the band of airspace between FL310 and FL390, previously released to the Afghanistan Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism for transiting international civil aircraft to operate through the Kabul FIR by the CF. The meeting was also presented with a Draft Contingency Air Traffic Management Plan (CATMP) for Transit of the Kabul FIR by International Civil Aircraft. This plan required changes to the present route structure which had been previously agreed to by the CF within the same band of flight levels plus some additional necessary adjustments. The meeting should note that subsequently, the CATMP has been agreed to by the CF, approved by the President of the ICAO Council in accordance with ICAO procedures and implemented on AIRAC date of 5 September, 2002. A Chart showing the agreed transit routes for international civil operations is at appendix A to this working paper.

Special Coordination Meeting on Afghanistan (SCM/AFG/2) Bangkok, Thailand,
29 – 30 August 2002

2.3 At the request of the President of the ICAO Council, the ICAO APAC office held the second Special Coordination Meeting on Afghanistan (SCM/AFG/2) Bangkok, Thailand, 29 – 30 August 2002. The purpose of this meeting was to endeavour to better understand the civil/military requirements for airspace in and adjacent to the Kabul FIR and to find solutions to current problems that would continue the safety and efficiency of operations in accordance with ICAO Standards by international civil aircraft operating in this area.

2.4 The meeting was attended by Afghanistan, India, Oman, Pakistan, United States of America, members of the CF operating airspace in Afghanistan and the International Airline Transport Association (IATA).

2.5 The meeting should note that over the past three months, there have been four reported serious incidents between international civil aircraft and military transport or combat aircraft in or close to the Kabul FIR. On all occasions, the military aircraft involved was flying at the same IFR altitude as the civil aircraft with no known ATC clearance, crossing ATS routes which had been reserved for civil aircraft by agreement with the CF.

2.6 All of these occasions required the civil passenger aircraft to take avoiding action, either by following the TCAS resolution advisory (RA), or by an ATC instruction to change heading.

2.7 The meeting would recall that ICAO Annex 2, Appendix 3 para b) to the Convention on International Civil Aviation lists the altitudes for VFR Flight above FL290 as even altitudes, e.g. FL300, FL320, FL340 etc. It therefore seemed appropriate that, in order to harmonize civil and military operations for the benefit of all concerned, when military aircraft have an urgent operational requirements to cross routes which have been allocated to international transiting aircraft through the Kabul FIR or within an adjacent FIR, they do so either at FL290 and below or if necessary, at even VFR altitudes above FL290.

2.8 Of particular interest to the meeting were the arrangements established by the CF for the safety of international overflights. The meeting recalled that under the current arrangements control authority rests with the CF for the Kabul FIR. The Coalition had delegated five ATS routes or corridors through the Kabul FIR with restricted flight levels bands to be managed by MOCAT for

international civil overflights operating between Asia and Europe. Two routes, V838 and V888 (FL 310-390) are the primary trunk routes where the incidents described above had occurred.

2.9 It was recalled that at the SCM/AFG/1 meeting at Dubai, the CF representative pointed out that strict procedures were in place for military aircraft that were required to operate the ATS routes (corridors) delegated to MOCAT. All such aircraft, when under the control of the Airborne Early Warning (AEW) aircraft, were not permitted to climb or descend within a radius of 20 NM around the civil aircraft. If this could not be achieved, the military aircraft would change level outside the lateral limits of the ATS route(s) concerned.

2.10 It was pointed out by the representative of CF that under Article 3 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the annexes to the Convention were not applicable to State aircraft, and that Contracting States undertake, when issuing regulations for their State aircraft that they will have due regard for the safety of navigation of civil aircraft. In this regard, the meeting was advised that the US voluntarily applies the Convention and annexes to its State aircraft operations. The meeting noted that State aircraft operating over sovereign territory comply with ICAO provisions to obtain approval to operate and that they follow published ATS procedures including filing of flight plans. In international airspace, State aircraft operate under the principle of due regard and in visual conditions. The meeting discussed the preferred option of military aircraft operating above FL 290 in non-RVSM international airspace to fly at FLs in accordance with Annex 2 – *Rules of the Air*, Tables of Cruising Levels, Appendix 3, paragraph b) for VFR flights, i.e. even flight levels. This would allow 1000 ft vertical separation between military and civil aircraft. The CF representative advised that he would recommend to the Coalition Forces Air Component (CFAC) that the Annex 2 provisions on selection of VFR cruising levels in Appendix 3, paragraph b) be adopted for CF aircraft operating under due regard.

2.11 The meeting should note that arrangements have been agreed between CAA Pakistan and the CF to establish corridors of airspace in the Pakistan FIRs to accommodate Coalition aircraft operations. Effective coordination and communication procedures are in place, and there has been a significant reduction of incidents since these improvements were introduced.

2.12 The Coalition representative reiterated that, whenever operations permit, flight plans and traffic information would be provided to the ATC authority for international airspace in a timely manner. Further, in regard to follow up to be taken by the CF for incidents involving CF/civil aircraft, arrangements need to be established, whereby incident reports received by ATS providers and IATA are channeled through ICAO to the Office of the Executive Director of the Department of Defense Policy Board on Federal Aviation.

2.13 IATA advised the meeting that the airways delegated to MOCAT by the CF for civil operations (V838, V888, A466 and V876) met the basic needs for long-haul civil aviation. However, the restriction of FL310 to FL390 for operation on V838, V888 and to a lesser extent on A466 limited westbound operations, as very few aircraft could reach FL350 by the Lahore/Kabul FIR boundary and that FL390 was virtually unusable for the heavy flights westbound for Europe. Therefore, IATA requested that CF consider a FL280 - FL370 corridor on at least V838/V888 (named L750/N644 effective 5 Sept). The CF advised the meeting that if FL390 was given back to them, it would be very useful for their operations. They requested if IATA would consider relinquishing this level. Unfortunately, the CF could not commit to release any lower flight levels back to civil operations but would consider the request based on their operational requirement. IATA stated they would coordinate this request with airlines concerned and would advise the CF as well as ICAO.

2.14 With regard to future routes, the CF representative advised that they would consider all requests made through MOCAT and, as operations permit, would approve additional routes and flight levels.

2.15 The representative of MOCAT provided information on the prevailing conditions in Afghanistan concerning the status of the civil aviation infrastructure and air navigation facilities. It was noted that as a result of 23 years of war most of the airports, communications and navigation aids, VSAT system, runways, taxiways, terminal buildings, meteorological stations, fire fighting equipment and stations, and other essential facilities were destroyed or severely damaged. Some recovery had taken place and the VSAT was now operating at Herat, Kabul and Mazar-I-Sharif. Improvements were being made to some terminal buildings, especially at Kabul Airport. MOCAT has a plan to rehabilitate the civil aviation infrastructure as soon as funding is obtained. The meeting was advised on the need for improvements to equipment to provide flight safety and air navigation services, and funding was urgently required to support these needs.

2.16 Afghanistan further advised that with the opening of a limited number of ATS routes for transiting international civil aircraft through the Kabul FIR, air navigation charges have been re-established which has given consequential revenue to Afghanistan. Under the circumstances of bringing peace to Afghanistan, the action being taken by the CF is fully supported and it is understood that they would return the airspace control to MOCAT as soon as circumstances permit.

2.17 AIS arrangements for preparation and distribution of NOTAMs for Afghanistan were reviewed. It was confirmed that MOCAT did not have an AIS capability and their AFTN system based on VSAT was only partially operational. Earlier difficulties with handling NOTAMs, as reported at the SCM/AFG/1 Meeting at Dubai, had been largely overcome. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) had provided assistance to RAMCC to distribute their NOTAMs and will continue to assist both the CF and Afghanistan MOCAT in AIS matters.

2.18 The meeting considered its future role and it was agreed that this forum provided an essential means of coordination and information exchange and should continue on a regular basis. It was suggested that two meetings a year should be arranged under the auspices of ICAO, and for the next meeting to be held in the spring of 2003. The US DOD and ICAO will coordinate a suitable time and venue for this meeting and advise other participants accordingly.

Summary of Action to be taken

2.19 In summary, the meeting agreed to the following actions:

- a) the CF representative will recommend to CFAC that the Annex 2 provisions on selection of VFR cruising levels in Appendix 3, paragraph b) be adopted for CF aircraft operating under due regard;
- b) for all flights arriving and departing in the Kabul FIR via published VFR ATS routes, the CF will reinforce the operation of existing procedures;
- c) when operations permit, CF aircraft operating under due regard will advise the appropriate ATC unit on the radio frequency in use for the airspace concerned;
- d) the CF will give priority to re-establishing a liaison link in Kabul with MOCAT; and
- e) as this forum provided an essential means of coordination and information exchange between civil and military providers and users, two meetings a year should be arranged under the auspices of ICAO. The next meeting to be held

in the spring of 2003. The US DOD and ICAO will coordinate a suitable time and venue for this meeting and advise other participants accordingly.

3. **ACTION BY APANPIRG/13**

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the progress accomplished in civil/military coordination, to ensure that a safe and efficient service is maintained for international civil aircraft flying over or adjacent to Afghanistan airspace during times of high military activity;
- b) urge all concerned parties to continue their cooperation to ensure the safety and efficiency of all civil aircraft in areas affected by military operations in Kabul and surrounding FIRs.
