



1.3 Multiple/duplicate flight plans were identified as an issue in 1994, but an acceptable solution to all operators and ATS/AIS providers was never developed and implemented. The following are learned information items:

- ICAO requires that flight plans be filed, but not who must file the flight plan.
- The ICAO rules for filing flight plans to fulfill the filing requirement were developed to meet the operational flight processing systems at that time and have not changed.
- The automated flight processing systems for each ATC/AIS are at different automation levels.
- Some States require operators to file Repetitive Flight plans (RPL) every six months as permission to operate in and out of that State.
- Some States require a local flight dispatcher to file the flight plan locally at the AIS office.
- A flight plan for one flight may be submitted by three different sources: 1) by Repetitive /RPL flight plan; 2) locally at the AIS office; and/or 3) from the operators dispatch centers, which does not include any amended flight plans.

## **2. Discussion**

2.1 The FAA has been conferring with the airlines and IATA to identify a possible solution. Most, if not all, possibilities for a solution have resulted in a negative counter response. At present, there is no immediate solution. However, several proposed future fixes show merit and could be further explored.

### **2.2 Proposed Solutions:**

- Unique identification number inserted into the remarks section of the flight plan. The number could be referenced as to the validity of the appropriate flight plan in an aircraft's FDM and filed flight plan. The suggestion was not acceptable to all parties due to the complexity of use and tracking.
- European filing of flight plan information using field 18 of the ICAO filing format. The suggestion was discussed but did not fit all the different scenarios that each operator uses.
- Unique address when filing an ICAO flight plan to indicate whether the flight plan was received from the Operator or was the locally filed flight plan. The main point was to have a unique address identifier from the Air Carrier operations to indicate the most accurate filed flight plan. Again, the suggestion did not fit the various customer operations.
- The pilot filing the flight plan as received from Operations. The filed flight plan would match the aircraft's FMS to reduce "duplicate" filed flight plans. The suggestion was not adopted because the pilot is not a licensed dispatcher, which is a requirement for flight plan filing.

### **2.3 Known AFTN and ICAO issues**

- AFTN Processing: The assumption is that the latest filed flight plan should be the most valid. However, when the AFTN circuit is heavy, the circuit will delay processing. When processing is resumed, the flight plan may not be the latest updated version.

- Multiple versus duplicate flight plans: Multiple flight plans could be filed and accepted into the automation system because a change to any part of the ICAO filed flight plan does not constitute an exact "duplicate". The term "duplicate" is a misnomer in that an exact duplicate flight plan is rejected by FAA automation systems, but a slight change to the flight plan is accepted as a "duplicate " but is actually an additional multiple flight plan/s.
- ICAO use and application of message Identifiers: The "FPL", "CPL", "CHG", "DLA" messages identify the appropriate state of filing. Discussions indicated that these messages are not being applied appropriately.

2.4 The following items are possible actions to be taken in the future as a result of the discussions from the conference calls:

- IATA on a case-to-case basis will work with the Air Carriers to resolve the filing of multiple flight plans. This will be a continuing effort to reduce the percentage of multiple filings keeping in mind the filing requirements as dictated to the Air Carrier by law and the "States".
- The issue has grown from multiple-duplicate flight plan problem to an issue of safety. Multiple flight plans with multiple routes, results in the determination of which is the correct route to process. The wrong route can result in an Operational Error or incident.
- ICAO Rules for Filing: The rules that were created by ICAO in the past were developed to match the automation of the times. With the advances of technology the current rules do not enhance the technological capabilities of the users. With the updating of the rules to match user capabilities, duplication problems can be reduced.
- Implementation of the "CPL" messaging: Allowing "CPL" processing with adjacent facilities will reduce duplicate flight plans in that the "CPL" flight plans would be the most accurate (active movement) flight plan to be processed.

### **3. Conclusions**

3.1 Multiple/duplicate flight plans is a safety concern that causes confusion and could result in an ATS incident, AIRPROX, or other major event. The flight plan sitting in the flight progress strip bay or automated systems (electronic strips) may be incorrect, giving the air traffic controller a false sense of security.

3.2 This problem has been identified by several FAA air traffic facilities such as Miami, Houston, San Juan, and New York ARTCCs. The problem is not isolated to US FAA Air Traffic facilities, other ATS units in the CAR/SAM regions may be experiencing the same issues and the extent of the problem needs to be determined.

3.3 There are too many sources (airline dispatch office, local dispatch office, repetitive flight plans, etc.) for flight plans to be submitted and/or amended. Therefore, limiting the sources and finding a method to determine the latest and most accurate flight plan is important.

3.4 States in the region may have different flight plan filing requirements for airlines to provide service to/from that country. These requirements may be contributing to the multiple/duplicate flight plan issues being experienced by ATS service providers.

3.5 The extent of the problem needs to be determined and solutions developed and implemented that may involve ATS service providers, States, Airlines, IATA, and ICAO.

4. **Recommendations**

4.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) take note of the information provided in this working paper;
- b) request ICAO's assistance to communicate the concerns with multiple/duplicate flight plans with Civil Aviation Authorities and ATS Service Providers;
- c) determine and forward the issue to the proper ICAO meeting and existing working group that can address the problem and come up with possible solutions; and
- d) Communicate the issue and potential safety concern at future ICAO meetings.

- END -