



International Civil Aviation Organization

The Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group Meeting (AHACG/1)

Istanbul, Turkey, 17-19 November 2014

Agenda Item 2: Afghanistan ATS Status and Capability Building

STATUS OF MILITARY TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

(Presented by NATO/ISAF)

SUMMARY

This paper presents background on recent airspace and airfield transition efforts in Afghanistan as well as the current situation that NATO/ISAF and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) face. This paper also looks beyond the present and immediate future to lay out the principles and goals for an enduring partnership between NATO, GIRoA and the international community.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Some challenges exist in transitioning an aviation system designed primarily to support military operations to one that places civil operations in the forefront. The Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has made great strides in developing an organization that conforms to ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) but still lacks human capacities to run control the airspace and operate major airports.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Background.

Afghanistan airspace is a strategic asset not only for Afghanistan as a landlocked country, but also for Europe and Asia. Therefore, maintaining airspace management in accordance with international standards is vital to the region's economy and international aviation. Controlling Afghanistan airspace is an international problem because it links European flights to Southeast Asia.



2.1.2 One of the key responsibilities of an Airspace Control Authority is to ensure coordination with civilian aviation authorities for the de-confliction of military and civilian flight operations. The first step toward establishing this coordination was the signing of a three-way Memorandum of Arrangement (MOA) between the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (now Ministry of Transport), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Commander United States Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) in 2002. A key excerpt from that MOA reads:

“In order to enhance the safety in civil aviation and to facilitate aviation commerce within Afghanistan, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Afghanistan and the Combined Forces Airspace Control Authority (ACA) for the Coalition mission in Afghanistan acknowledge that, for an interim and limited period, the ACA will control the airspace within Afghanistan. The ACA will exercise this control as long as United States military operations require or until such time as the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism is capable, either independently or through ICAO assistance under appropriate technical co-operation projects, of assuming responsibility for air traffic services and aviation facilities within Afghanistan.”

2.1.3 Four months later, civil airlines resumed over flight of Afghanistan and military airlift operations were on the increase moving military equipment and personnel. At the same time, there was also an increase in air traffic as the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other civil aircraft operators focused their attention on the region. This sharp rise in air traffic highlighted a need for positive en route control within Afghanistan. In March 2004, it was agreed to establish an en route control center in Kabul. Over the next year, the task of developing a comprehensive airway system and installing communications equipment across the country as well as brokering air traffic control letters of agreement with all five surrounding countries was accomplished. Since then, Kabul Area Control Center (KACC) and Kabul Approach Control (KAC) have been manned by civilian contractors funded by the United States Air Force.

2.1.4 Buildup of the Afghan aviation sector has been a success story in the 12 last years. While there was almost no aviation sector in 2002, yearly traffic has risen from 60,000 overflights in 2006 to an estimated 100,000 in 2014. More than 40 different airlines transit Afghanistan's high airspace routes conducting 250 daily flights. Today, Afghanistan earns \$400 per flight in overflight fees yielding an annual estimate of almost 40 million dollars, compared to \$25 million in 2006. The low airway structure is used for all aircraft taking off and landing in Afghanistan. There are currently 5 Afghanistan airlines and 12 international carriers providing passenger and cargo service in Afghanistan. These flights provide another amount to Afghanistan in landing, security and parking fees.

2.1.5 Over the years, there have been many achievements by several donors supporting the development of Afghanistan's civil aviation infrastructure. The initiative to establish an Afghanistan Partners' "Tiger Team", to be led by NATO Headquarters International Staff, was the main outcome of a special high-level meeting called by ICAO in September 2011, when the President of the ICAO Council decided to assume a facilitating role in promoting the development of a common and coordinated way ahead for aviation normalization and transition. The outcome of this "Tiger Team" was the development of an *Afghanistan Civil Aviation Roadmap (ACAR)*, *Aviation Action Plan (AAP)* and *Terms of Reference for the Aviation-Donor Coordinating Board*. These three documents were delivered to the Afghanistan Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation (MOTCA), in a May 2012 meeting called by the President of the ICAO Council which included the Ambassadors to ICAO of Germany, France, India, Japan, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States, representatives of the European Union, United States Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, United States Air Forces Central Command, NATO Headquarters, ISAF, ICAO Secretary General, and the Directors of Air Navigation and Technical Co-operation Bureau.

2.1 The plans for the transition of airspace and Kandahar, Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif airports, developed in coordination with the Afghan Authorities, were based on the assumptions that sufficient Afghan personnel would be trained, training facilities and trainers/mentors available, financial issues resolved as agreed in the Aviation Action Plan. While progress was made in some areas of training and qualifying Afghans, it became clear that there would not be enough Afghan human capacity in the airspace and or airfield areas for the transition. In 2013, a team from MoTCA, Ministry of Finance, the US Embassy, and ISAF's Civil Aviation Transition Branch developed the concept for a National Aviation System Transition Contract (NASTC) to transition aviation services with a contract over a five year period. The goal was that the airspace and airfield contract should be awarded no later than GIRoA 1 Jan 2015.

2.2 Transition.

2.2.1 When we speak of transitioning airspace and airfield services, it is important to define what those services are. The airspace includes Kabul Area Control Center (KACC) with the high sector above flight level 290, the low sector from flight level 160 to flight level 290 and Kabul Approach Control (KAC). Airspace services also include all of the communications and radar equipment necessary for air traffic control in the high, low and Kabul Approach Control sectors.

2.2.2 Airfield services include the five major airfield services ATC tower, fire and crash rescue service, airfield and safety management, communications and navigation systems maintenance, and meteorology and additional airfield services. These services are currently provided through a mix of NATO contracts, military personnel, international civilian consultants, and local civilian hires. NATO contracts currently provide airfield services at Kandahar (KAF) and Kabul International Airport (KAIA). Military manpower from Framework Nations (FN)/Lead Nation provide airfield services; Germany for Mazar-e-Sharif; and Italy and Spain for Herat.

2.2.3 The Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC), which exercises Airspace Control Authority (ACA), a military function, with responsibilities to ensure coordination with civil aviation authorities and to ensure de-confliction of military and civilian flight operations, stands ready to transition the airspace back to Afghan control if either of the following conditions are met, 1) the military do not require the airspace or, 2) MoTCA (now the Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority) is capable of assuming responsibility for air traffic services and aviation facilities which conform to ICAO SARPs.

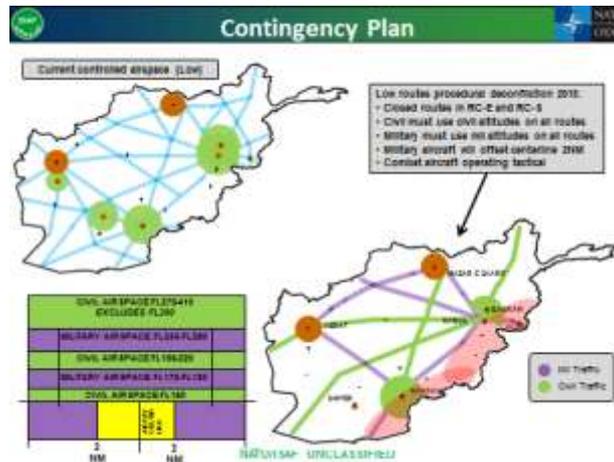
2.2.4 If the NASTC for airspace is signed, NATO/RSM will assist the ACAA in determining the competency of the contractor and also help the ACAA set up a civil military coordination mechanism, especially in the area of deconflicting military and civilian air operations to include ground fires.

2.2.5 Several technically capable providers submitted bids to provide control services, including the current provider. If Afghanistan, working with the international community, could have resourced the initial year of the contract, the overflight revenues were almost sufficient to cover the remaining costs. Properly executed, this contract would have yielded an affordable Afghan air traffic control system within 5 years. GIRoA rejected the contract proposals on 2 OCT.

2.2.6 To prevent a possible interruption in airspace services, GIRoA requested US Embassy assistance to acquire a bridge contract with current provider to extend airspace services. The bridge contract would enable GIRoA to re-negotiate a long term contract. U. S. Department of Defense cannot legally fund the extension under the Resolute Support mandate. Therefore the U.S. Department of State has provided funds for the extension, but the DoD will execute and manage the contract.

2.2.7 We estimate the contract extension to be 6 to 9 months. Therefore, it is critical for GIRoA to release a new Request for Proposals and issue a new long-term contract before the extension expires.

2.2.8 ISAF and the CFACC have developed a contingency plan using tactical command and control procedures so that the military can continue to support ongoing operations and the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in the event contracted services expire.



2.2.9 Airfield transition sector build has been a success story over the last decade. In Kabul more than 200 Afghan students have been trained by coalition, for example 70 Afghan firefighters and around 20 air traffic controllers. Kabul International Airport has more than 30 international flights every day, but the other three airports have only single digit numbers of international flights every day.

2.2.10 Part of the NASTC was to contract airfield services for these major airfields beginning Jan 2015. The previous NASTC transition timeline for the four major international airfields is no longer achievable and the previous projected transition to GIRoA on 1 January 2015 is not possible. Therefore, NATO has extended their airfield services into 2015 at the four international airports. This extension ensures that international carriers will still use Afghanistan airfields and provides GIRoA more time to build up own capacities.

2.2.11 The airfield services that are currently provided through a combination of military manpower, local civilian hires or international civilian consultants will be mainly provided by contractors in 2015 due to the restrictions on the number of military personnel in Afghanistan.

2.3 Enduring Partnership.

2.3.1 Following NATO's post-2014 engagement in Afghanistan, NATO has agreed to establish a joint mechanism to strengthen political consultations on issues of mutual strategic concern. Enduring Partnership will assume a greater weight, becoming the prime vehicle for the relationship between NATO and Afghanistan over the long-term. Considering the specific needs of the Afghans, NATO International Staff will consider specific tailor-made activities for the sustainability of the Afghan aviation sector.

2.3.2 On 4-5 September 2014, a NATO Summit was held with Head of State and Government of Allies and their ISAF troop contributing partners. Over the last thirteen years, NATO/ISAF has assisted the Afghan people to regain control over their nation's destiny. It has helped Afghanistan make significant advances in the aviation domain; especially with the development of an independent civil aviation authority. There are still many challenges remaining. However, NATO's commitment to Afghanistan will endure beyond ISAF and will also need support from neighboring nations, air

navigation service providers, and the international aviation community. In particular, the establishment of a training, assistance and advice Resolute Support mission, starting at the completion of ISAF, a trust fund of 3 billion USD to sustain financially the Afghan National Security Forces in the period 2015-2017, and the long-term Enduring Partnership programme constitute concrete and tangible efforts of an enduring NATO commitment to Afghanistan.

3.0 ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper; and
- b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.