

International Civil Aviation Organization

Fifteenth Meeting of the APANPIRG ATM/AIS/SAR Sub-Group (ATM/AIS/SAR/SG/15)

Bangkok, Thailand, 25 – 29 July 2005

### Agenda Item 8: Deficiencies in the Air Navigation Field

#### AIR TRAFFIC SERVICE DEFICIENCIES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

(Presented by IATA)

#### SUMMARY

This paper presents a review of some of the air traffic service deficiencies in the Asia Pacific Region.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The deficiencies related to the provision of air traffic services in the Asia Pacific region detailed in this paper are not new. Some of them have been in existence for a long time. While the provision of air traffic services in some FIRs have been exemplary, the same cannot be said for all the FIRs. Worst still, in some cases, the level has actually deteriorated.

1.2 Together with the growth of air traffic in the region we have seen the implementation of new route structures such as the South China Sea and the EMARSSH route structure, and the introduction of RVSM. This might have taken away some of the attention but with Inchoen FIR and Japan domestic airspace going RVSM in Sept 2005, the last chapter for RVSM implementation in the region would probably be completed, for a while at least. It is time to focus our attention on getting the basic requirements across all FIRs, to an internationally acceptable level, so that consistency in flight safety can be maintained. IATA has raised these issues at various forums before, but we believe there is a need to re-iterate these here.

#### 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The following are just some examples of the deficiencies that appear to be endemic. These include air -ground and ground-ground communications, use of non- standard R/T phraseology, unintelligible communications due to poor command of English, poor ATC practices and procedures, non-compliance with Annex 14 requirements and Annex 15 notification requirements, etc.

#### 2.2 Air-ground and ground/ground communications

2.2.1 Flights operating over Yangon, Mumbai (oceanic), Dhaka and Kabul FIRs frequently suffer from the inability to establish and maintain two-way communications with the respective ATC units. Meeting should note that the situation in Yangon FIR is exacerbated by the fact that flights are required to transition from a non-ICAO metric to CVSM to RVSM levels. This has necessitated the implementation of an IATA In flight Broadcast Procedure (IFBP) requiring pilots to transmit their positions to each other on a separate frequency as well as a contingency procedure blocking of conflicting levels in the opposite direction, allowing aircraft to transition from one flight level system

to another if communications cannot be established. This cannot be a permanent fixture, and a solution can be found only if the communications air/ground communications are satisfactory. IATA is encouraged that Myanmar has recently installed new radio communications equipment. However, we continue to receive reports of poor, and at times, no communications with Yangon ATC.

2.2.2 Frequent reports are received from flights operating in Mumbai FIR of exceedingly congested and poor HF communications. This is a busy FIR with heavy traffic volumes. Good continuous air-ground communications has to be an absolute requirement for the area, if flight safety is to be maintained. We note that India has ADS/CPDLC on test in Mumbai and Delhi currently, and implementing data-link and addressing the congestion issues should go some way towards alleviating the HF communications issues.

2.2.3 Reports of loss of HF communications with Ujung Pandang ACC also occur frequently. Although the traffic volumes might not be as high, the large distances involved where communications are not available are a major cause for concern. The fact that that volcanic eruptions occur within this FIR as well only heightens the concerns. We note the implementation of Makasar ACC and FIR and look forward to much improved HF and VHF radio communications.

2.2.4 Air-ground communications in the Kabul FIR used to be a major problem and we had reported at the last meeting that this had been fixed. Unfortunately, there continues to be sporadic reports of poor communications.

### 2.3 Unintelligible communications due to poor command of English and use of nonstandard R/T phraseology.

2.3.1 It is well understood that many ATS units in the region are not manned by native English speakers. Except for a few states like US, Australia and New Zealand there are few if any, native English speakers manning the HF or VHF radios. This does not mean that they cannot or do not speak English. However, we have to accept that there is certainly a strong presence of local accents, both in the ATS and pilot community in this region, which can only make it harder to understand each other. All the more reason for standard RT phraseology to be used at all times. As an international standard is soon to be established and ATS personnel are required to be benchmarked, both controllers and pilots should be quickly tested to ensure they meet the ICAO level 4 standard.

2.3.2 It is a basic and fundamental requirement that ATS communications are carried out using standard R/T phraseology. This seems to be a simple directive to follow, but is, violated more frequently than we can imagine. The meeting is urged to take particular note of this. We urge ATS Service Providers to carry out unsolicited surveys and checks from time to time to ensure that only standard phraseology is used. With English as a second language, it is all the more imperative that there is strict adherence to standard R/T phraseology, and that communications facilities are of the highest quality.

# 2.4 **ATC practices and procedures**

2.4.1 The practice of late delivery and fragmenting of the Route Clearance continues to cause concern. In the past it was not uncommon for flights to be given their route clearances while taxying towards the runway. Although this could be uncomfortable if it was a lengthy clearance, pilots could still cope, as all that was required was manual copying down of the clearance, and the pulling out and review of charts and the assigned procedure. With the advent of the glass cockpit, the clearance has to be entered into the FMS, and this is better achieved when the aircraft is stationary, preferably before pushback. It is also preferred that the full clearance, including the SID, be given together with the route clearance as these also have to be entered into the FMS. To be informed of the SID just prior to the take-off clearance is certainly not the best time for the cockpit crew. Sudden

changes in the SID and level restrictions, at or near the take-off point are equally unhelpful and in the worst case can become contributing factors leading to accidents.

2.4.2 The way forward is to implement PDC, which will resolve many of the problems mentioned above.

# 2.5 **Compliance with Annex 14 requirements**

2.5.1 It goes without saying that strict compliance with Annex 14 standards are necessary to ensure the safety of flight operations. However, as traffic grows, many airports have found themselves ill-equipped to handle the increased flow, because of inadequate space in the manouvering areas, which in turn results in complex procedures. Further, as aircraft continue to grow larger, many airports in the region have found themselves unable to meet the requirements to accommodate these aircraft. The latest challenge comes in the form of the Airbus 380, which is expected to enter service in the end 2006. How many airports in the region are equipped to handle these aircraft? How many have plans that have gone beyond the drawing board?

2.5.2 Kite flying and uncontrolled fireworks displays in the vicinity of busy international airports, cattle and other domestic animals inside the airport; all these hazards continue to plague some of the busy international airports in the region.

# 2.6 **Compliance with Annex 15 notification requirements**

2.6.1 Operators continue to encounter airspace and air route closures, changes to navigation procedures, etc., where insufficient time was given. Annex 15 states "at least 7 days". There were cases where hardly any, and very often no lead-time at all, was given. It is understandable that sometimes the ATS authority itself was not given time but it has to be emphasized that regularity of flights has to be safeguarded, and the relevant ATS authority has to play its role in ensuring that this message is understood by all concerned. Publishing changes in approach procedures at an airport, without complying with the Annex 15 requirements will not achieve the desired result, as operators will not be able to comply with the new procedures because the necessary charts will not be available. For these the minimum requirement is at least one AIRAC cycle. Two AIRAC cycles will ensure that all the necessary measures by charting agencies, operator dissemination of the information and training, will be accomplished. This has been raised many times before, but it continues to recur.

2.6.2 It cannot be overemphasized that insufficient lead time, and /or implementation on non-AIRAC dates means that flights may not have the relevant charts or data in their FMS to support the change. In this connection states should also note that it should never have the same waypoint name with different coordinates.

# 2.7 **ATS Incident Reporting**

2.7.1 ICAO Doc 9426 Part II Chapter 3 requires that reporting of air traffic incidents and ATS investigation procedures be established in order to ensure high standards of safety in the conduct and control of air traffic. Near collisions, serious difficulty caused by faulty procedures or lack of compliance with applicable procedures and serious difficulty caused by failure or ground facilities are identified as air traffic incidents and are reportable.

2.7.2 It should be noted that an initial report would most likely be made on radio by the pilot. Following an air traffic incident the ATC unit involved should ensure that the accident/incident authority and the national ATS authority are notified of all reportable incidents.

2.7.3 To ensure that incident reports are sent by operators, and are received in good time at the appropriate ATS unit, it is imperative that every FIR provides a contact address with a responsible

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person. We respectfully request that this meeting takes the decision to make a list of contact persons and addresses to which operators can send incident reports for investigation and resolution. In this regard, IATA wishes to acknowledge the effort made by Indonesia, in providing us with an email address for incidents reports to be sent to, which we have circulated to all IATA members. We still feel that there is a need for a list of contact persons representing each FIR, whom operators could contact for clarification and to send incident reports to.

#### 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Passenger traffic in ASPAC grew 8.2 % from Jan to April 2005. In the Middle East it grew by 13.6%. In North America it grew by 11.5%. To stand still is to be overtaken. It is imperative that we all redouble our efforts to cooperate, confront and correct.

### 4. ACTION BY THE MEETING

4.1 The meeting is invited to note the safety concerns arising form these deficiencies and work towards resolving them.

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