



ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 16: Improvement of safety oversight

**ASSOCIATION OF CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES OF THE CARIBBEAN –
REGIONAL AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT SYSTEM (RASOS) ACTIVITIES**

(Presented jointly by Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago)

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

This information paper provides a description of the development, activities, achievements and future plans for the Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System developed by the Association of Civil Aviation Authorities of the Caribbean. It describes a co-operative approach to sub-regional safety oversight for small States.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Civil Aviation Authorities of Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, OECS (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago signed an agreement in late 2001. The agreement formalised their participation in and support for a co-operative approach to aviation safety oversight in the form of the “Association of Civil Aviation Authorities of the Caribbean” (ACAAC) under the umbrella of the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM) Secretariat. The eight authorities’ collective mandate is to provide aviation safety oversight and other aviation services for fourteen small nations in the Caribbean region. Although all participating States are members of the CARICOM this is not a pre-requisite for membership in the ACAAC.

2. Discussion

2.1 The ACAAC was formed in response to the lack of required organisational capacity and technical skills for any one of the small states to fully meet, on a sustainable basis, the requirements of civil aviation safety oversight required under the Chicago Convention. The ACAAC agreement responds to the challenge by implementing a mechanism, the Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System (RASOS), which reduces the cost of providing the required airworthiness and flight operations oversight services to individual member states. The implementation of the RASOS and the support provided to it

by ICAO, FAA and Transport Canada has seen growth in the existence and availability of the required technical skills in the various states. The RASOS is working to optimise the use of the region's technical resources. Its focus is strengthening the civil aviation authorities, promoting the upgrading and harmonisation of regulations, standards, procedures guidance material, inspector training and enhancing the ability of the individual states to fully discharge their safety oversight responsibilities. The sub-regional approach chosen is consistent with the global strategy promoted by ICAO to address safety oversight problems of contracting states.

2.2 In September 2002 that the RASOS General Board chose Kingston as the site of the interim co-ordinator's office. The present host organisation, the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority, provides office space, and administrative and financial support services. RASOS now has its own bank accounts and is fully funded by equal member CAA contributions of some USD 52,000.00 each, annually, to cover the costs of the RASOS office staff emoluments and operations.

2.3 RASOS has developed its corporate strategic plan for the period 2004-2008 and has embarked on several harmonisation initiatives. The decision to share the technical resources resulted in a pool of some 32 trained technical inspectors available to each Authority rather than just the 4 or 6 that are normally on staff in any one of the small organisations. All of the participating states are now more advanced in upgrading the capability of their civil aviation oversight organisations. For example, with respect to the FAA International Aviation Safety Assessment program, Jamaica had already achieved Category One at the formation of RASOS, Suriname advanced to Category One in 2003, and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are expected to advance to Category One in late 2004.

2.4 The establishment of a Regional Safety Oversight Co-ordinator's Office to organise, co-ordinate and manage the technical resources of the various national authorities and to supplement their skill base was agreed upon as the most appropriate mechanism to discharge the obligations of the states. The RASOS, at a later stage, would pioneer the development of a sustainable regional authority similar to those promoted and supported by ICAO in Europe, Africa and Latin America. This has already been unofficially proposed. It is looked upon favourably by the CARICOM Secretariat as being completely in keeping with the goals of the CARICOM Treaty of Chaguaramas, and being supportive of the economic objective for a CARICOM Single Market Economy (CSME) as has been the subject of attention from the highest political levels in the Caribbean region.

International Assistance

2.5 Assistance from the United States Federal Aviation Administration was offered in September 2002 and was accepted at the First Meeting of the Board of Directors for the RASOS in Guyana the same month. A team comprised equally of technical experts from RASOS Member States and the FAA completed a regional safety oversight needs assessment report in December 2002 that provided the necessary framework to proceed with a structured work plan to enhance the capabilities of all member States authorities. During 2003 the focus was on training of technical staff and the FAA and ICAO hosted numerous training courses in North America and in the region for the RASOS group's inspectors. While training continues to be an ongoing priority, the RASOS group is now focusing closely on harmonisation issues. It has formed six working groups to study and make recommendations to the Board regarding changes and enhancements to achieve a greater degree of standardisation and commonality among the seven RASOS members. These working groups are active in the areas of aerodrome certification; personnel licensing; safety regulations and standards; foreign repair station approvals; inspection methodology and reporting forms; flight test standards, flight test examiner/check airmen guidance and flight test reporting forms.

Use of Internet Communications

2.6 A RASOS web site has been developed and it contains both public information and members' only sections. The public sections describe the organisation, achievements, contain some of the briefing material and slides presented at recent ICAO regional DCA meetings. The members' only section has two levels of security for the regional CAA inspectors, the Directors and RASOS staff. The latter contains minutes, financial reports, working group reports and administrative information and pertinent regional technical information. The inspectors' section contains downloadable inspection forms, common guidance material, flight test forms and other data required by the region's technical staff such as the regional collation of each RASOS state's civil aircraft register. The web site also hosts a safety newsletter, a contact RASOS section and provides an e-mail server for the Directors, RASOS staff and all technical safety inspectors in the RASOS group. It is developing as a very strong tool for communication and information and data sharing and for providing a public identity for the organisation.

Technical Focus

2.7 The RASOS office has now provided or co-ordinated direct technical support to and for Jamaica, the Republic of Guyana, Barbados, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It participates with two FAA technical aviation experts and one FAA aviation legal expert who work on a collaborative basis through RASOS and with States bilaterally to assist member States with aviation safety oversight improvements. The FAA assistance focus is aimed at aiding the CAA to achieve compliance with the ICAO Annexes 1, 6 and 8 and at successful FAA IASA audits and upgrade of CAA to IASA Category One. The RASOS focus includes the FAA objectives but is also more widely focused on compliance with all 18 ICAO Annexes including air traffic services, accident investigation, aerodrome safety and aviation security as well as on CARICOM regional development including support to CARICOM regional transportation, work and trade objectives. RASOS is set up employ flight operations and airworthiness technical experts and an administrative support person as well as to operate in co-operation with the technical experts from the FAA or other donor organisations who have been assigned to work with the RASOS program.

Conclusions

2.8 The direct beneficiaries of the ACAAC's RASOS organisation are the participating States of CARICOM and other States or Territories in the region that might become part of the regional oversight mechanism during the next few years. Other beneficiaries are the owners and operators of aircraft in these States and Territories and the users of the air services including the tourism sector of the economies. External benefits flow to the States from the improved aviation safety environment resulting from the upgraded aviation infrastructure and the increased surveillance and enforcement of the safety standards established by ICAO.

2.9 The new RASOS organisation is now maturing after two years of operating experience and is facilitating the establishment of a self-sufficient regional safety oversight system in an area of high priority to all participating States as well as to other States whose airlines operate into the region. ACAAC and RASOS are becoming a regional success. Even with the current level of member funding for the RASOS office and its operations the organisation will continue to need support for funding for both future operations projects and normal growth as well as for the planned expansion into involvement with all aspects of aviation.

2.10 The immediate benefit of regional co-operation is evident from the constantly improving track record of results of the ICAO and FAA safety oversight audits of member CAA. Benefits are also accruing to members from the mutual technical co-operation, mutual technical assistance, attainment of greater numbers of trained and qualified technical inspectors, and the valuable technical expertise contributions made while assisting Authorities in their march toward full ICAO and FAA IASA compliance with international aviation safety oversight standards.

2.11 International support exists and international interest is now focused on this young and dynamic organisation. The ACAAC RASOS is being looked at as a model for other states interested in developing mutual co-operation in safety oversight. The ACAAC and its RASOS branch are ready to provide any information and advice to interested organisations. States are invited to contact the RASOS Office for additional information.

(ACAAC) Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System
2 Winchester Road
Kingston 10, Jamaica
West Indies
Telephone: 876-960-4364 Facsimile 876-929-4352
E-mail: <rasos@cwjamaica.com> or <contactus@rasos.org>
Web Site: www.rasos.org

- END -