



ICAO

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North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

WORKING PAPER

NACC/WG/6 — WP/07

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Sixth North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group Meeting (NACC/WG/6)

On-line, 25 to 27 August 2021, 09:00 to 13:00 (UTC-5)

Agenda Item 2: Follow-up on Valid Conclusions and Previous Agreements of the NACC/WG, GREPECAS, NACC/DCA and Other Related Meetings

2.3 Follow-up to GREPECAS improvements and AN Projects (AIM, ATM, AGA, CNS, MET and SAR).

STATUS OF SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) ACTIVITIES

(Presented by SAR Task Force Rapporteur)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Paper presents a summary of the activities related to the implementation and provision of search and rescue services during the year 2020 and part of 2021.

Action:	Suggested actions are provided in Section 5.
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doc 7300 - <i>Convention on International Civil Aviation</i>• Annex 12 - <i>Search and Rescue</i>• Caribbean (CAR) Region Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan

1. Introduction

1.1 Assistance to aircraft in distress is one of the basic principles of the Chicago Convention. In addition, the States and Territories of the CAR Region rely largely on tourism, which due to its location have aviation as the main means of transport for foreign visitors.

1.2 An adequate Search and Rescue (SAR) service is a priority to guarantee the life of the traveling public, the continuity of air transport and the aviation important contribution.

1.3 In response to the growth in air operations carried out in our region, the States and Territories have given priority to the development and expansion of air navigation services. However, this same priority is not reflected homogeneously throughout the Region for the provision of search and rescue services.

2. Approval of the Caribbean (CAR) Region Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan and the establishment of the NAM/CAR SAR Implementation Task Force

2.1 During the Fourth Meeting of the NAM/CAR Regions Air Navigation Implementation Working Group (ANI/WG/4) Miami, United States, 21 to 24, August 2018, it was decided that, in order to support SAR implementation in the CAR Region, the ANI/WG establish an Ad hoc Group to draft the Regional SAR Implementation Plan for the CAR Region.

2.2 This regional plan should include concrete recommendations to address regional SAR support, identifying ongoing regional initiatives and opportunities to improve them at a broader level; This Ad hoc group was made up of representatives from Cuba, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, United States (United States Coast Guard), and COCESNA.

2.3 The SAR Ad hoc Group held several teleconferences to coordinate the delegated tasks and worked on the development of the first draft of the CAR SAR Regional Plan, which was presented to the Fifth Meeting of NAM/CAR Regions Air Navigation Implementation Working Group (ANI/WG/5) Mexico City, Mexico, 27 to 31 May 2019.

2.4 The ANI/WG/5 Meeting decided to approve the CAR Regional SAR Plan, as well as the establishment of the ANI/WG SAR Task Force, as part of the ANI/WG structure, to support the SAR implementation in the CAR Region and lead activities to support compliance with the NAM/CAR Regional Performance-Based Air Navigation Implementation Plan (RPBANIP) regional performance objectives.

2.5 The NAM/CAR Regions Search and Rescue Implementation Task Force had its first meeting in September 2019. A second meeting proposed for 2020 had to be postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be held online from 7 to 9 September 2021.

3. SAR activities in the NAM/CAR Regions for 2020 and 2021

3.1 Participation in the SAREX ARGENTINA-URUGUAY

3.1.1 Representatives of the CAR Region participated as invited observers in the Search and Rescue coordination exercise, carried out between the search and rescue coordinating centres of Argentina and Uruguay, which included the simulation of a response to a crisis. All levels of the SAR service intervened in it, but without its deployment.

3.1.2 The purpose of carrying out this SAREX is to evaluate the coordination between the Aeronautical SAR Service (RCC ARGENTINA) with the Maritime SAR services and Argentinian Institutions and with the RCC Montevideo, managing the scene of an accident of an aircraft in the ocean Atlantic, close to the jurisdictional border Argentina-Uruguay.

3.2 COBUSA Meeting

3.2.1 As is carried out every year, the meeting of the Central American Search and Rescue Committee (COBUSA) was held, which was attended by representatives of the Central American States, Ecuador, Panama and the ICAO NACC Office.

3.2.2 At this meeting, important matters were addressed, which should be followed up on a timely basis and try to evaluate the progress that has been made to date, such as the following:

- Need for high-level support to promote the strengthening of the SAR issue, with the support of ICAO;
- Promote the integration of the aeronautical and maritime sectors;
- Promote SAR training programs for the NAM/CAR Regions;
- Promote the participation of the military authorities to obtain a better integration with the civilian party.

3.3 *Follow up to the signing of Letters of Agreement*

3.3.1 The signing of the SAR collaboration agreements is one of the pending matters between some States and international organizations of the Region. Complications derived from the involvement with different government entities and the lack of understanding regarding the scope of search and rescue operations are the main difficulties identified.

3.3.2 During 2020, the conversations between Colombia and COCESNA were resumed to review their SAR letter of agreement. This was concluded positively in 2021. Other conversations that have been carried out are between Cuba and Haiti, and Cuba and COCESNA, which have progressed satisfactorily but have not yet been completed.

3.4 *Challenges for SAR activities during the COVID-19 pandemic*

3.4.1 One of the factors that have most affected SAR activities during this pandemic is the reduction by States of qualified personnel in SAR functions (due to layoffs, deaths due to COVID-19), therefore there is a lack of knowledge in terms of attention to compliance with procedures, which has led to the reduction of response capacities in a reasonable time, so it is recommended to do a risk analysis focused on this specific case.

3.4.2 Another important aspect to highlight is the absence of proper training of personnel in biosecurity measures, which affects the adequate response to emergency situations.

3.4.3 Likewise, due to the prevention measures for the contagion of COVID-19, SAR trainings are being carried out virtually. However, these trainings are not as effective as the face-to-face ones, since they limit the attention of each participant by a large percentage, resulting in many doubts at the end.

3.5 *Priorities of the Region in SAR matters.*

3.5.1 It is necessary to prioritize and strengthen through a surveillance plan with identified immediate actions that bring specific positive actions when there is evidence of the absence of letters of Agreement (LOAs) that are not signed and that have remained for years without being signed. This would bring a real commitment with the requirements that are requested at the time of an emergency between adjacent Flight Information Regions (FIRs) or between the states of a specific region.

3.6 *Future plans*

3.6.1 Establish a standard program to improve the capabilities of SAR personnel through ICAO/IMO aeronautical and maritime training supported by the following documents:

- Annex 12 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation
- The International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue
- Regulation V / 33 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS 1974)

3.6.2 Execute a SAREX between States and Territories of the NAM/CAR Regions. To achieve the high degree of competence, all SAR facilities must periodically engage in coordinated operations. Exercises allow you to test and improve operational plans and communications, increase experience, and improve liaison and coordination skills.

4. Conclusions

4.1 SAR activities in our regions deserve due attention from the States, Territories and International Organizations involved with the provision and supervision of these important services.

4.2 Supporting and sustaining the action plans prepared for each State is the best guide for improving SAR implementation, supervision, and operation.

5. Suggested actions

5.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a. take note of this report and make recommendations as deemed appropriate;
- b. encourage States, Territories and International Organizations of the NAM/CAR Regions to maintain their support for activities to support the implementation of search and rescue services; and
- c. arrange for any other action deemed necessary.