



ICAO

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North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

WORKING PAPER

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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 4: Implementation of Air Navigation Issues

4.6 Regional Contingency Plans

REGIONAL CONTINGENCY PLANS

(Presented by the Secretariat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Working Paper presents a summary of the recent Air Traffic Management (ATM) regional contingency planning and response activities for the CAR Region and future related work.

Action:	Suggested actions are included in Section 5.
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CAR Region ATM Contingency Plan

1. Introduction

1.1 Due to the geographical configuration of the Caribbean, civil aviation is much more than a mean of transportation. It represents a strategic element for connectivity, as well as an irreplaceable support for the economic development of States.

1.2 Aviation infrastructure and operations are vulnerable to periodic weather related events, but at the same time, required for a quick recovery to support humanitarian aid and support in case of natural disasters.

1.3 In this context, consistent planning and evaluation of implemented procedures is required in order to enhance resiliency of air transportation.

2. Background

2.1 Regional contingency planning strategy has been addressed by the CAR/SAM Planning and Implementation Regional Group (GREPECAS) with the establishment of an action plan for the development of ATM contingency plans in the CAR and SAM Regions. This plan is made of the following phases:

- Phase I – Development of ATM contingency plans;
- Phase II – Harmonization of ATM contingency plans with neighbouring States/Territories/International Organizations; and
- Phase III – Submission of ATM contingency plans to the ICAO Regional Offices.

2.2 Several events that occurred during 2017 made evident the weakness of the CAR Region to organize a strategic, harmonized and well-coordinated response to contingency situations that affected the provision of air traffic services. Under these circumstances, the need for an adequate preparation from ATS providers and proper oversight from Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) was reaffirmed. The Region also learned that contingency planning should take into consideration different scenarios and that these could be presented simultaneously and affect more than one Upper Flight Information Region (UIR)/Flight Information region (FIR) or Air Traffic Services (ATS) provider at the same time.

2.3 In order to address the identified challenges and support the implementation of an enhanced CAR Regional Contingency Planning and Response Strategy, the NAM/CAR Air Navigation Implementation Working Group (ANI/WG), States and Territories approved the CAR REGION AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CONTINGENCY PLAN (Version 1.3 July 2020).

2.4 The purpose of the Plan is to provide guidance and promote a regional harmonized response to contingencies, and provide guidelines for the development of contingency planning based on conclusions and decisions by the GREPECAS and ANI/WG. In addition, the Plan brings the CAR Contingency and Emergency Response Coordination Team (CAR CERT) as a more active coordination platform for Regional contingency response.

3. Discussion

3.1 *2020 Hurricane Season*

3.1.1 The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was one of the most active seasons with a total of 29 tropical storms and 14 hurricanes. Some States of the CAR Region were severely affected, after suffering consecutive hurricanes that impacted their territories.

3.1.2 Regional coordination has improved significantly, thanks to the leadership and support of key stakeholders for each sub region.

3.2 *COVID-19 Pandemic*

3.2.1 Most of the 2020 contingency planning and response activities were dedicated to support regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.2 The ICAO NACC Office compiled and published guidance material to support ATSS provision in a COVID-19 context. Additionally, several webinars were provided to participants from the NAM/CAR and other Regions, to elaborate on specific strategies and share lessons learned.

3.2.3 From this experienced the importance of communication, networking and building relationships among ATS units and other relevant stakeholders was emphasized, in order to share best practices and up to date information.

3.2.4 Currently, some States and Territories are experiencing an increase in flights, while others see a more paused recovery. The Region must be prepared with personnel and procedures in order to allow the best possible recovery scenario.

3.3 *La Soufriere Volcano*

3.3.1 Located on the island of Saint Vincent, La Soufrière Volcano erupted on 9 April 2021. The eruption caused devastation to areas within St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) due to lava flows and heavy ash deposits. Consequently, all airports in SVG and neighbouring islands of Barbados and Saint Lucia were closed.

3.3.2 The regional response to this event was timely and very effective, with an enhanced coordination and information sharing strategy led by Trinidad and Tobago with the support of eastern Caribbean States and key stakeholders.

3.4 *Contingency Plans – Updates and Table Top Exercises*

3.4.1 Periodic review and update of ATM contingency plans continue to be a priority for the ICAO NACC Regional Office.

3.4.2 In 2020 teleconferences to review the ATM contingency plans were planned and conducted with each of the States of the CAR Region. Unfortunately, some States and Territories have not developed and published their ATM contingency plans, as regionally agreed.

3.4.3 A list of all ATM contingency plans is available in the following website: <https://www.icao.int/NACC/Pages/edocs-atm.aspx>.

3.4.4 In 2021 sub-regional teleconferences have been conducted to review each one of the contingency plans and carryout table-top exercises. The purpose of the table-top exercises is to test communication channels and rehearse contingency scenarios in order to verify the effectiveness of procedures detailed in the contingency plans published and identify opportunities for improvement.

3.4.5 In 23 June 2021, a teleconference with the eastern Caribbean States/Territories and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) was conducted. ATM contingency plans were reviewed and communication channels were tested. The collaboration with the eastern Caribbean States has improved significantly, which is very important since the coordination with this subregion alerts the rest of the Caribbean region regarding possible trajectory of hurricanes and similar phenomenon.

3.4.6 From 3 to 5 August 2021, teleconferences were conducted with the six central American States and COCESNA to review and update the Central America ATM contingency plans and evaluate current contingency procedures. During these teleconferences, a table-top exercise was conducted and failures to central America ATM systems were simulated. This exercise gave a very good opportunity to identify opportunities to improve Central America ATM resiliency. Similar activities are planned to be conducted annually.

3.5 *Planned activities for 2022*

3.5.1 For the first quarter of 2022 the Second Regional Contingency and Emergency Planning and Response Meeting (NAM/CAR/CONT/2) will be held at the ICAO NACC Regional Office in Mexico City. This Meeting will assess the impact and evaluate the response of contingency situations faced in 2021 and make the necessary arrangements to prepare for the 2022 hurricane season by carrying out a table-top exercise to simulate various contingency scenarios in the CAR Region.

3.5.2 Additionally, a continuation of the contingency planning activities of 2021 is being coordinated for Central American states.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Adequate planning and preparation is vital to ensure an effective response to contingencies faced by air navigation services provision.

4.2 Our Region has shown significant progress regarding the compliance with ICAO Standards and Recommended practices (SARPs) for contingency arrangements and regional agreements, as well as the involvement of States and Territories in scheduled activities. However, it is necessary to continue working in a continuous and sustained manner in order to improve the resilience of the air navigation system of the Caribbean Region.

5. Suggested actions

5.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) encourage States, Territories and ANSPs of the CAR Region to develop and update their ATM Contingency Plans;
- b) Support ICAO NACC ATM Contingency Planning and Response proposed activities;
- c) Recommend any additional actions deemed appropriate.