



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization
North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

WORKING PAPER

NACC/WG/8 — WP/07 Rev.
15/08/23

Eighth North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group Meeting (NACC/WG/8)
Mexico City, 29 August - 1 September 2023

- Agenda Item 3: Follow-up of NACC/WG 2022-2023 Action Plan**
3.6 NACC/WG progress in operations: AO, Air Traffic Management (ATM), Search and Rescue (SAR), ATFM and Aerodromes and Ground Aids (AGA)

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SEARCH AND RESCUE IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE (SAR/TF)

(Presented by the SAR/TF Rapporteur)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
This Working Paper presents the progress made by the Search and Rescue Implementation Task Force (SAR/TF) since its previous progress report. This Paper includes details of the activities carried out and draws attention to points that deserve the attention of the entire NACC/WG.	
Action:	Suggested actions are presented 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">• Preliminary report of the Fourth NAM/CAR North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group Search and Rescue Implementation Task Force (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/4) Meeting, ICAO NACC Regional Office, Mexico City, Mexico, and Online, 9 to 11 August 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 The provision of search and rescue services (SAR) is based on one of the basic principles of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, in order to provide the means of assistance deemed necessary to aircraft in distress.

1.2 In addition to reducing the loss of life, the interest and participation of a State in SAR services offer significant benefits such as the promotion of the safe use of different means of transport, such as air and maritime navigation, the improvement in the capacity critical response to natural or man-made disasters, the promotion of national and interstate cooperation in key aspects of national security, among others.

1.3 The provision of SAR services is an indivisible part of the responsibilities of States with respect to the provision of air navigation services, as part of the Convention. All airspace users must be guaranteed an effective and efficient SAR service, consistent with the international requirements assumed by the States for the airspaces in which they have agreed to provide air navigation services.

2. Background

2.1 For several years, regional initiatives to support the implementation of search and rescue services in the CAR Region have been facing significant challenges to be maintained. The lack of support and adequate representation in the meetings organized by ICAO had led to the suspension of these activities, causing a lag in regional support for the SAR implementation.

2.2 Since 2017, the ICAO NACC Regional Office began the implementation of a renewed SAR support strategy, which allowed the approval of the CAR Region SAR Plan, the establishment, as part of the NACC Working Group, of the Task Force to support SAR Implementation and the convening of annual SAR follow-up meetings.

3. Results of the Fourth NAM/CAR North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group Search and Rescue Implementation Task Force (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/4) Meeting

3.1 The Fourth Meeting of the North American, Central American and Caribbean NAM/CAR Working Group Search and Rescue Implementation Task Force (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/4) was held at the ICAO NACC Regional Office in Mexico City, Mexico, and Online, from August 7 to 11, 2023. It was attended by representatives of 18 States, Territories, and International Organizations of the NAM/CAR/SAM regions, as well as from the EUR region.

3.2 This meeting addressed the follow-up to the work program of the Task Force, as well as other aspects related to the provision of the SAR service that deserves to be addressed as part of the activities of the NACC/WG.

3.3 Provision of SAR services in the Eastern Caribbean: The main priority

3.3.1 The meeting analysed the provision of SAR services in the Eastern Caribbean, specifically in the Piarco Search and Rescue Region (SRR). The SAR provision in this SRR is quite complex, as it involves integration between various States and Territories at different service levels. The CAR/SAM Regions Air Navigation Plan assigns to Trinidad and Tobago the responsibilities for the establishment of the Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) for this SRR and five Rescue Sub-Centers (RSC), namely: Antigua (Antigua and Barbuda), Bridgetown (Barbados), Pointe Salines (Grenada), Fort-de-France and Pointe-a-Pitre (France). The ICAO NACC Regional Office works with Trinidad and Tobago to verify the operation of its RCC, which is essential to organize the SAR response.

3.3.2 The Task Force remains to be informed of the advances in coordination between Trinidad and Tobago and ICAO, to follow up on the verification of operating procedures, as well as SAR agreements. Similarly, it is expected to receive information regarding the status of the signing of SAR agreements, particularly between Piarco RCC (Trinidad and Tobago) and the United States Coast Guard.

3.3.3 As a positive point, an interregional SAR exercise organized by France for May 2024 was reviewed. The RCC Piarco, and the States and Territories under the Piarco SRR, are requested to actively participate in this exercise. It was noted the interest of the United States and the United Kingdom Territories in watching this exercise unfold.

3.3.4 The NACC/WG must maintain its attention to the SAR provision in this SRR and sensitize the decision makers of the CAR Region about the importance of SAR services and promote an adequate implementation of the requirements of Annex 12 – Search and Rescue, as well as regional agreements on this subject.

3.4 Review of the SAR scope and responsibilities for the CAR Region and the need for collaboration with the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

3.4.1 The ICAO NACC Regional Office requested support from the Task Force for the work of updating the Air Navigation Plan of the CAR/SAM Regions Volume I with the limits and responsibilities in terms of Search and Rescue. As of the date of preparation of this Working Paper, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have not responded to the request made by ICAO to designate points of contact to represent their State, with authority to provide information and make decisions on lateral and vertical limits of its FIR/UIR and SRR.

3.4.2 The SAR delimitation has an additional complexity to the other air navigation services, since the assignment of aeronautical SAR responsibilities carried out within the ICAO and the maritime SAR responsibilities carried out according to the IMO are different. In other words, the limits of the aeronautical and maritime SAR search and rescue regions do not necessarily coincide, while some areas of indeterminate responsibility remain. This is a fairly complex issue with implications for territorial sovereignty, which is why the SAR Task Force suggests developing greater coordination with the IMO.

3.5 Approval of the project to support SAR implementation in the CAR/SAM Regions

3.5.1 The GREPECAS/20 Meeting, Salvador, Brazil, November 16 to 18, 2022, approved the SAR Implementation Project for the CAR and SAM Regions to allow greater visibility and support for related activities, communicating to the ICAO Council in a more objective manner the progress of SAR implementation in the CAR/SAM Regions, and seeking a better interregional harmonization. The Task Force assumed the activities of this project as a reference for its work program.

3.6 Smartphones Emergency Satellite Communications and Automatic Crash Detection Function – Impact on SAR and ANS Units

3.6.1 The Meeting discussed the new capabilities in smartphones for automatic emergency notification, mainly those carried out via satellite.

3.6.2 The meeting recognized the potential benefit of this technology, as well as the possible challenge that it could bring to search and rescue services, due to the increase in the reception of messages outside the channels established up to now. In this sense, it was suggested to inform the NACC/WG and GREPECAS so that the other areas of the air navigation services are aware of this technology and ensure that it is implemented in a responsible manner, allowing the telecommunications

authorities to take SAR services into consideration when approving the implementation and use of these new features.

3.7 Guidance on Autonomous Distress Tracking (ADT) for the SAR Plan of the Caribbean Region

3.7.1 The Meeting approved the incorporation in the Regional SAR Plan of the CAR Region of a guide, prepared by the United States in response to one of the tasks of the Group, with basic guidelines of the Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) for the CAR Region, including the sequence of events of the activation of the Autonomous Distress Tracking (ADT).

3.7.2 Assuming that aircraft will fly with ADT devices in 2023, there is an operational urgency to provide basic procedures and guidance to air traffic services units and RCCs as soon as possible. This guidance was created based on IMO guidance developed by SAR and Cospas-Sarsat experts. It is proposed that ATS units and RCC personnel become familiar with the GADSS guidance in Volumes I and II of the IAMSAR Manual, and that ATS units and RCCs be made aware of the guidance available in the Regional SAR Plan of the CAR region.

3.7.3 The ICAO NACC Office, with the support of the United States Coast Guard, plans to conduct another workshop on GADSS implementation in early 2024.

3.8 Evaluation of the SAR Basic Building Blocks (BBBs)

3.8.1 The meeting also discussed the issue of the work of the NACC/WG for the evaluation of the basic building blocks (BBBs) for the area of SAR. The Task Force analysed the challenges to complete this task objectively, so that it clearly reflects the support needs for SAR implementation and operation in the Region. Unfortunately, some States find it difficult to accurately respond to the status of their own systems with respect to Annex 12 requirements, so assigning this task in a survey fashion would place an additional burden on SAR personnel.

3.8.2 The Task Force agreed that more information on the BBBs was needed to complete this task and to gather information on the experience of other regions in this assessment. The meeting requested the ICAO NACC Regional Office to coordinate with other regional offices and request enhanced guidance. The meeting also considered that this evaluation should be based on evidence and that experts from the SAR Working Group could assist in the evaluation of the evidence. This evaluation should consider a face-to-face visit to the State's SAR facilities.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Despite the difficulties and limited support for SAR activities, the Task Force has been able to consolidate its activities and focus on following up on critical points for SAR provision.

4.2 In some cases, the complexity of SAR services is underestimated, mainly due to the lack of knowledge on the subject. It is increasingly necessary to have SAR personnel, adequately trained, and clearly established procedures to deal with unwanted situations. The need to develop, update and improve SAR agreements is a fundamental condition for the provision of these services.

4.3 The SAR Implementation Support Task Force makes the following recommendations to NACC/WG/08:

- 1) Maintain attention to the provision of SAR services in the Piarco SRR, promote the coordination of operational procedures between the Piarco RCC, the RSCs under this SRR and neighbouring RCCs, as well as the signing of pending SAR agreements;
- 2) Support the work for the delimitation of SAR scope and responsibilities in the CAR Region and promote collaboration with IMO;
- 3) Take SAR services into consideration when new capacities are approved or implemented in smartphones regarding automatic emergency notification, mainly those carried out via satellite; and
- 4) Follow up on the update of the SAR Plan of the CAR Region to include basic guidelines of the Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) for the CAR Region, including the sequence of events for the activation of the Autonomous Monitoring of the Danger Situation (ADT).

5. Suggested actions

5.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) evaluate the content of this Working Paper and take actions to address the points highlighted in it;
- b) endorse the recommendations included in Section 4.3;
- c) request the ICAO NACC Office to gather more information and provide better guidance on the mechanism used in other regions for the evaluation of BBBs; and
- d) suggest any additional action deemed necessary.