



**Fifth GREPECAS–RASG-PA Joint Meeting (GREPECAS-RASG-PA/5) and
Twenty-Third Meeting of the CAR/SAM Regional Planning and Implementation Group
(GREPECAS/23)**

Virtual Phase (Asynchronous, 19 January to 17 February 2026)
In-Person Phase (Mexico City, Mexico, 4 to 6 March 2026)

Agenda Item 9: Other business to be addressed in the virtual phase

**INTRODUCTION OF SEPARATION CRITERIA DURING AN
AIRCRAFT INTERCEPTION**

(Presented by Ecuador)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper proposes an update to the procedures followed by air traffic services (ATS) units regarding the interception of civil aircraft. It aims to optimize coordination and operational safety through the inclusion of a new subparagraph in Document 4444.

Action: Include subparagraph g) in Section 15.5.2.1 of Document 4444. See section 3.

Strategic Objectives 2026-2050:

- Every flight is safe and secure
- Aviation is environmentally sustainable
- Aviation delivers seamless, accessible, and reliable mobility for all
- No country left behind
- The International Civil Aviation Convention and Other Treaties, Laws and Regulations Address All Challenges
- The Economic Development of Air Transport Assures the Delivery of Economic Prosperity and Societal Well-Being for All

References:

- Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services*
- Doc 4444 — *PANS-ATM*

1. Introduction

1.1 Section 15.5.2.1 of Doc 4444 establishes the measures that Air Traffic Services (ATS) units must take upon detecting that a civil aircraft is being intercepted within their area of responsibility. These actions include establishing communications, notifying the pilot, and maintaining close coordination with the intercept control unit. See the text in **Appendix** to this paper.

1.2 To strengthen the safety framework and ensure there are no procedural gaps during these critical operations, the addition of subparagraph g) is proposed to complement the six existing measures (a through f) that currently govern the performance of ATS units.

2. Analysis of the Proposal

2.1 The interception of a civil aircraft constitutes an in-flight contingency situation that disrupts the normal flow of air traffic and increases the workload for both air traffic controllers (ATCO) and flight crews. In this scenario, the absolute priority of ATS units must be the mitigation of operational risks, especially the risk of collision with other aircraft operating in the vicinity.

2.2 Currently, Section 15.5.2.1 describes communication and coordination actions but does not explicitly emphasize the responsibility of the ATS unit to maintain prescribed separation between the intercepted aircraft (including its interceptors) and the rest of the commercial or private traffic. The dynamic and, at times, unpredictable nature of interception maneuvers requires the ATCO to take a proactive stance to segregate the affected traffic.

2.3 Therefore, the inclusion of subparagraph g) is proposed to formalize the management of separation:

g) provide separation from other traffic in accordance with in-flight contingency considerations.

By treating the interception under in-flight contingency considerations, the ATS unit can apply more robust or flexible separation criteria as necessary, ensuring that the safety of other aircraft within the area of responsibility is not compromised.

3. Suggested Actions

3.1 It is proposed that Section 15.5.2.1 of Doc 4444 be amended to include the following text:

15.5.2.1 "As soon as an air traffic services unit learns that an aircraft is being intercepted in its area of responsibility, it shall, as appropriate, take such of the following steps as the circumstances may require:
[a, b, c, d, e, f...]

g) provide separation from other traffic in accordance with in-flight contingency considerations."

This additional text ensures that the comprehensive aviation legal framework for the 2026–2050 period includes clear traffic management protocols during interception events, aligning with the strategic objective “Every flight is safe and secure”.

Appendix

15.5.2 Interception of civil aircraft

15.5.2.1 As soon as an air traffic services unit learns that an aircraft is being intercepted in its area of responsibility, it shall take such of the following steps as are appropriate in the circumstances:

- a) attempt to establish two-way communication with the intercepted aircraft via any means available, including the emergency frequency 121.5 MHz, unless such communication already exists;
- b) inform the pilot of the intercepted aircraft of the interception;
- c) establish contact with the intercept control unit maintaining two-way communication with the intercepting aircraft and provide it with available information concerning the aircraft;
- d) relay messages between the intercepting aircraft or the intercept control unit and the intercepted aircraft, as necessary;
- e) in close coordination with the intercept control unit take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of the intercepted aircraft; and
- f) inform ATS units serving adjacent FIRs if it appears that the aircraft has strayed from such adjacent FIRs.