International Civil Aviation Organization

Fifteenth Meeting of the ICAO Aeronautical Information Services − Aeronautical Information Management Implementation Task Force (AAITF/15)

Video Teleconference, 01 – 05 June 2020

Agenda Item 6: Regional AIM Guidance and Planning

MANAGING POSTPONEMENT TO CHANGES OF AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTED UNDER AIRAC SYSTEM

(Presented by Singapore)

SUMMARY

This paper seeks to review the need for guidance materials on the management of postponement to changes of aeronautical information distributed under AIRAC system.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Aeronautical Information Regulation and Control is a system established to ensure that changes to aeronautical information are made available and effective by States/Administrations in a consistent manner on globally agreed timelines. This ensures that the downstream stakeholders in the data chain, such as the data integrators and aircraft operators, are able to perform their obligations and keep the necessary manuals and documents up-to-date and in a timely manner.

1.2 Adherence to the AIRAC system, where changes are effected on scheduled predetermined dates, does not just depend on the AIS provider. The upstream stakeholders of the data chain i.e. the data originators, play a significant role as well, given that they are the trigger for changes in aeronautical information. It is imperative that these data originators factor the AIRAC timeline into their project planning and change management. Thorough planning and the cooperation of all parties involved would be needed to ensure that the project proceeds on time and there is no postponement of the effective date of change.

1.3 The current guidance stipulates that any postponement of effective date of change should be notified by way of NOTAM at least 28 days in advance of the indicated effective date. This is elaborated in the discussion below. However, there may be occasions when, due to events that are beyond the control of the data originators and AIS provider, there is a delay in the project which results in the effective date of the change being required to be postponed at the last minute. This may happen despite the fact that all parties involved had taken all possible and reasonable measures to ensure that the project takes place as planned.

2. DISCUSSION

Problem Statement

2.1 States/Administrations would recognise that postponement of changes to Aeronautical Information distributed under the AIRAC System as per the ICAO AIS Manual (Doc 8126) “has the effect of cancelling information notified by AIRAC and reinstating previously valid information”. Doc 8126 also highlights that a last minute postponement may result in insufficient time for the valid information to be reinstated into the navigation databases, charts or operating manuals, which could result in erroneous information being presented. As such, Doc 8126 emphasises that all possible measures should be taken to ensure that changes to circumstances that have been published as an AIRAC publication should take place as notified on the AIRAC effective date. Doc 8126 proceeds to conclude that postponement by NOTAM should be issued more than 28 days in advance of the indicated effective date on the AIP Supplement, unless the circumstances are of a temporary nature and would not persist for the full period. This leaves ambiguity in what needs to be done in the event of a last minute postponement for changes to aeronautical information for such an AIP Supplement.

2.2 As such situations are not addressed in Doc 8126, it would be left to the discretion of the AIS provider to develop a work flow to manage last minute postponement. Given that the principle of an AIRAC system is to ensure that such operationally significant changes to aeronautical information are made in a consistent manner by States/Administrations at a global level, not documenting a guidance on how to manage the postponement goes against the principle. It is inadvertent that even with careful planning and coordination, there would be occasions when a project is disrupted or delayed, due to circumstances beyond any parties’ control. Such circumstance includes inclement weather, and even more contemporary is the disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3 In Singapore, the AIS provider has established close coordination with the data originator, to ensure that they understand the AIRAC system, its significance, and the importance of such a system. In our formal arrangements with the data originators, it is also indicated that the data originators are required to comply with the AIRAC cycle. Operationally, to further impress upon data originators the importance of adhering to AIRAC, we require the data originators to factor the AIRAC effective dates into their consideration at the planning phase of the project and to closely adhere to the timeline. If data originators are unable to comply with the AIRAC effective dates, they are to conduct a risk assessment and develop and implement the necessary risk mitigation measures.

2.4 However, we also recognise that there may be circumstances where despite the data originators having taken all reasonable measures in the planning and coordination to ensure that the project goes along as planned, the project faces delay due to events beyond the control of the data originators and/or AIS provider. A simple and common event is inclement weather. On many occasions, Singapore’s unpredictable weather has caused project timelines to go awry. As a result, projects generally include a buffer in the timelines to factor that in. The impact of such delays is felt especially strongly if the actual on-the-ground work for the project is an overnight changeover, e.g. taxiway renaming exercises. Such projects involve months of planning and coordination prior to the activity, all of which culminate into a single day of on-the-ground work, during which the signage are changed, and the taxiways are renamed. If the weather however turns unfavourable during the period when the work is supposed to be conducted, it would result in a delay to the project, and the effective date of the change would thus need to be postponed. In such situations, it is sometimes impossible to know with certainty whether the work can take place on the effective date declared until the last moment, resulting in less than 28 days of advanced notice.

Addressing the issue

2.5 Singapore has put in place a workflow to address instances of postponement in effective date. Data originators are required to inform us as soon as they are aware of a delay which will result in the postponement of the effective date. The data originators would then need to make an assessment on the earliest time that the issue can be rectified so as to implement the change. A NOTAM would then need to be promulgated, informing the aviation community of the delay, including the reason for the delay, and to indicate the new effective date, which should be as soon as possible. The NOTAM duration will last for the period until the change is effected. If the delay is expected to last beyond that particular AIRAC cycle, the data originator would be expected to issue a NOTAM informing of the cancellation of the AIRAC AIP Supplement. The validity of the NOTAM will last till the 1st of the following month, which is when the AIS provider publishes the NOTAM List. The NOTAM List would show a compilation of all the supplements still in effect and those that have been withdrawn. A separate AIRAC AIP Supplement can then be published at the next AIRAC publication date.

2.6 Singapore also includes the preceding information in the Supplement, to show the information that has been superseded. This would ensure that if, in the event that there is a last minute postponement to the effective date of the change, users would still be able to refer to the previously valid information which has now been reinstated.

Conclusion

2.7 It is inevitable that almost every AIS would at some point need to handle last minute postponement of changes to aeronautical information distributed under the AIRAC system. Without a global standardised procedure for managing such postponements, each AIS provider from various States/Administration is likely to have developed their own solution. Singapore proposes that it would be useful for States/Administrations to share their best practice on handling such situations so that we can learn from each other.

2.8 In the spirit of ensuring that operationally significant changes to aeronautical information are made in a consistent manner by States/Administration at a global level, it may also be useful to form a focus group to develop guidance materials to address postponement of changes to aeronautical information that have been published in adherence to the AIRAC system. The intent is not to encourage States/Administrations to be lax on the adherence to the AIRAC system, rather to address the practical situation of how postponements can be managed.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

a) note the information contained in this paper;

b) share their best practices to manage postponement of changes that requires adherence to AIRAC

c) discuss the need for a focus group to develop guidance materials to address postponement of changes to aeronautical information;

d) discuss any other relevant matters as appropriate.

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