



ICAO

The Fourth Meeting of the Aerodromes Operations and Planning Sub-Group (AOP/SG/4)

Video Teleconference, 10 to 13 November 2020

**Agenda Item 4: Provision of AOP in the Asia/Pacific Region
 – Certification and Operations of Aerodromes**

ALPHANUMERIC CALL SIGN INITIATIVE

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper provides information on the safety requirement for alphanumeric call sign use in radio communication, and the need for support by aerodrome and aircraft operators.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The root cause for a significant number of airspace incidents, including Large Height Deviations (LHDs) and runway conflicts had been identified for many decades as radiotelephony call sign confusion, when a pilot incorrectly responds to an Air Traffic Control (ATC) instruction to another aircraft, or in some cases, when an air traffic controller provides an incorrect instruction to an aircraft with a similar call sign to that intended.

1.2 IATA had been actively promoting the use of alphanumeric call signs globally, due to the safety implications. As a result of a major alphanumeric call sign trial in the Middle East (MID) Region led by Emirates Airlines, the MID Region had widely implemented alphanumeric call signs.

1.3 With the support of IATA, the Asia Pacific Alphanumeric Call Sign project had been agreed at ATMSG/4 and endorsed at APANPIRG/27 through conclusion 27/15.

Conclusion APANPIRG/27-15: Use of Alphanumeric Call Signs for Scheduled Airline Operations	
What: That, ICAO conducts a Survey of Asia Pacific States to ascertain the status of capability to accept / process alphanumeric ATC call-signs for scheduled airline operations.	Expected impact: <input type="checkbox"/> Political / Global <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-regional <input type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ops/Technical
Why: To determine the ability of Asia/Pacific States to accept and process alphanumeric call-signs.	Follow-up: <input type="checkbox"/> Required from States
When: 1-Aug-17	Status: Adopted by PIRG
Who: <input type="checkbox"/> Sub groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APAC States <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ICAO APAC RO <input type="checkbox"/> ICAO HQ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: RASG	

1.4 During the IATA MID trial and from the APAC survey, some of the implementation challenges were:

- the possible need for software changes, in order to show both the commercial call sign visible to passengers and the alphanumeric call sign used by ATC, pilots and airport operational staff (such as gate operators); and
- a split between ATC call sign and commercial flight number.

1.5 Regarding airport systems, there was no single solution. When individual airports were reviewed, it became apparent that flight numbers were used in a plethora of interfaced systems beyond the obvious, such as the arrival and departure information boards and web sites. One example of a system that wasn't immediately obvious requiring adaptation was the parking stand guide in system at Dubai airport.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Regional Airspace Safety Monitoring Advisory Group (RASMAG/25) was held from 27 to 30 October 2020 by Video Teleconference (VTC) from the ICAO Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand.

2.2 With regard to ATC 'loop error' LHD events, Japan had provided a detailed analysis to the meeting regarding of these incidents were due to similar call signs.

2.3 In response to a query from ICAO, IATA clarified that its successful similar call sign initiative that had been implemented in the Middle East (MID) Region had not been able to progress in the Asia/Pacific (APAC) Region. One of the reasons for this had been the reluctance of aerodrome operators to implement change until an automated tool was available to accommodate alphanumeric call signs.

2.4 Noting the grave safety risks from such occurrences, the RASMAG/25 meeting agreed to the following Draft Conclusion (to be reviewed by the ATM/SG/8 and the AOP/SG).

Draft Conclusion RASMAG/25-3: Alphanumeric Call Sign Initiative	
<p>What: Noting: 1) the extreme safety risks associated with pilot-ATC miscommunication and the number of Category D (ATC Loop Error) Large Height Deviations (LHDs); 2) APANPIRG Conclusion 27/15. ATMSG Conclusions 5-5 and 5-6 regarding the Asia Pacific Alpha Numeric Call-Sign (ANCS) call sign project; and 3) alphanumeric call signs were a well-established call sign confusion mitigation, that: leading Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) and aerodrome operators, in coordination with CANSO and ACI, were urged to consider a trial to identify and overcome any barriers for the implementation of alphanumeric call signs, with a view to developing a project for the Asia/Pacific (APAC) Region.</p>	<p>Expected impact: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political / Global <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ops/Technical</p>
<p>Why: The Asia Pacific ANCS call-sign project had not been universally supported by aerodrome operators and ANSPs thus far.</p>	<p>Follow-up: <input type="checkbox"/> Required from States</p>
<p>When: 30-Oct-20</p>	<p>Status: Adopted by Subgroup</p>
<p>Who: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sub groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APAC States <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ICAO APAC RO <input type="checkbox"/> ICAO HQ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: RASG</p>	

2.5 For aerodrome operators, from the MID Region’s experience, the suggested course of action is to target the interface point at which the airport systems ingest the flight information. At this interface a process is required that translates an alphanumeric call sign into commercial flight numbers. The interface process could be an information technology ‘translator application’ or simply a person with a spreadsheet manually translating (most commonly at seasonal schedule submission). Once translated, all airport downstream systems will only deal with the commercial flight number. Hence no further adaptation is required.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information in this paper;
- b) discuss and endorse Draft Conclusion RASMAG/25-3 for APANPIRG/31 to consider; and
- c) discuss any other related matter.

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