



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization

The Eighth Meeting of the APANPIRG ATM Sub-Group

Video Teleconference, 23 – 27 November 2020

Agenda Item 6: ATM Coordination (Meetings, Route Development, Contingency Planning)

IPACG UPDATE

(Presented by Japan and the United States)

SUMMARY

This paper presents an update from the forty-sixth meeting of the Informal Pacific Air Traffic Control (ATC) Coordinating Group (IPACG/46), which was held virtually from 20 to 23 October 2020 for three hours on each day. Collaborative activities such as North Pacific (NOPAC) routes redesign were discussed, and decisions were made in order to improve the efficiency of air traffic services in the North and Central Pacific.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Informal Pacific Air Traffic Control (ATC) Coordinating Group (IPACG) was established to provide a forum for air traffic service providers and airspace operators to informally meet together and explore solutions to near term ATC problems that limit capacity and/or efficiency within the Anchorage, Oakland, and Fukuoka Flight Information Regions (FIRs).

1.2 The forty-sixth meeting of IPACG (IPACG/46) was held virtually from 20 to 21 October 2020 for three hours on each day. Before the IPACG/46, the thirty-third meeting of the Future Air Navigation Systems (FANS) Interoperability Team (FIT/33) was also held virtually from 14 to 15 October 2020 for three hours on each day.

1.3 The discussions of the IPACG/46 were facilitated by Mr. Ahmad Usmani, Manager, Asia Pacific Group, Air Traffic International Office, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Mr. Toshiya Shigenobu, Special Assistant to the Director, Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB).

1.4 The meeting was attended by representatives from the FAA, JCAB, assorted industries, and international organizations.

1.5 Collaborative activities such as North Pacific (NOPAC) routes redesign were discussed, and decisions were made in order to improve the efficiency of air traffic services in the North and Central Pacific.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The following are the significant outcomes from the work of IPACG/46 on topics relevant to the issues of the ATM/SG.

Air Traffic Oceanic Facility Updates

2.2 JCAB reported the current situation surrounding oceanic operations of the Fukuoka FIR under the circumstances of COVID-19. Traffic volume in the airspace was reported to be around 350 per day, compared with more than 600 per day one year ago. With the lower traffic volume, Japan is working to temporarily remove all altitude restrictions for User Preferred Routes (UPR). This is expected to be completed in November 2020.

2.3 FAA reported on their efforts to improve operations:

2.3.1 The FAA discussed the reduction in the number of flights due to COVID-19. Oakland ARTCC's oceanic traffic is about 40% of the pre-COVID-19 traffic levels. Anchorage ARTCC's traffic levels are down, but have not decreased as much as other facilities.

2.3.2 The FAA is working to implement 23 NM lateral PBCS separation. Facility Safety Risk Management (SRM) panels are being conducted at this time. No safety risk hazards have been identified so far with the implementation of 23 NM lateral separation.

2.3.3 Oakland ARTCC has developed procedures for generating Pacific Organized Track System (PACOTS) routes when volcanic ash (VA) is present. The procedures will standardize the way the FAA generates PACOTS around VA. The meeting discussed the time parameters and procedures for revising published PACOTS when a VA event occurs.

2.3.4 The requirement for a CPDLC position report when entering the Oakland ARTCC CTA has been removed from the FAA Pacific Chart Supplement and will be removed from the US AIP in June 2021.

2.3.5 The FAA received a letter from IATA requesting that they consider implementing cost savings and efficiency initiatives that could be implemented due to the reduced number of flights as a result of COVID-19. The FAA conducted Technical Interchange Meetings (TIM) with the operators and IATA to discuss the request. As a result of the meeting, Oakland and Anchorage ARTCCs are working to remove their Track Advisory program. The FAA and JCAB are working together to potentially eliminate PACOTS Tracks M and 8. The FAA is working to simplify their UPR guidance material and considering ways to reduce the UPR restrictions.

2.3.6 Anchorage ARTCC presented details on recent ATC-Zero events required for enhanced COVID-19 cleaning of the Control Room. The meeting discussed ways to reduce the impacts of the ATC-Zero events. Anchorage has developed a new plan for managing traffic when a COVID-19 cleaning is required. The new plan will eliminate the need for ATC-Zero and will be implemented in the very near future.

2.3.7 Anchorage ARTCC discussed their plans to conduct a UPR simulation trial in November 2020. The trial will allow them to evaluate unrestricted UPRs and identify areas where UPR restrictions can be removed.

2.3.8 Anchorage ARTCC briefed on upcoming Space Launches and Military Exercises in their airspace.

2.4 Efficiency in the JCAB and FAA controlled oceanic FIRs can be improved by increasing the numbers of RCP 240/RSP 180 approved aircraft. In this regard, IATA agreed to conduct an updated survey of their operators' plans to obtain PBCS approvals. Due to the higher number of cargo aircraft currently operating in the NOPAC, the percentage of PBCS-approved aircraft in the NOPAC has decreased. JCAB and FAA expect the survey to help with the development of NOPAC planning.

The Thirty-third FANS Inter-operability Team (FIT) Meeting (FIT/33)

2.5 The FIT/33 meeting was held virtually from 14 to 15 October 2020 (UTC) for three hours on each day. Participants from FAA, JCAB and satellite service providers (SSPs) presented nine papers on problem reports (PRs), PBCS monitoring, FANS/Datalink issues and SSP updates.

2.6 FAA Central Reporting Agency (CRA) reported information about 16 new PRs in the North and Central Pacific region, and JCAB CRA also presented information about new 15 PRs in the North Pacific region. The total number of new reports was significantly lower than previous periods due to the reduced traffic levels in 2020.

2.7 The PBCS monitoring reports from FAA and JCAB showed similar results to past reports, with overall performance meeting requirements. The main source of reports not meeting PBCS requirements involved switching between satellite and VHF/HF paths, but this was a small percentage of overall traffic.

Report on Japan's Airspace Redesign Plan

2.8 JCAB reported its en-route airspace redesign project to optimize ATC handling along predominant traffic flows by dividing the airspace at FL335. At the end of 2025, the whole upper airspace over Japan will be controlled by a single ATC unit, i.e. Fukuoka ACC, and lower eastern and western airspace will be controlled by Tokyo and Kobe Area Control Center (ACCs), respectively. To start with, from next month, re-sectorization will start for the western part of Japan. From 2023, the eastern part of Japanese airspace will be re-sectorized, and oceanic control currently conducted by Fukuoka Air Traffic Management Center (ATMC) will be transferred to Fukuoka ACC, thus leaving Fukuoka ATMC with ATFM/ASM functions only.

Special Procedures for In-Flight Contingencies in Oceanic Airspace

2.9 FAA presented information on their planned implementation of the amended Special Procedures for In-Flight Contingencies in Oceanic Airspace, which will be published in the Procedures for Air Navigation Service – Air Traffic Management (PANS-ATM) in November 2020.

2.10 JCAB also reported that it is preparing for the revision of PANS-ATM in November.

NOPAC Redesign

2.11 JCAB and the FAA reported to the meeting on the redesign project of the NOPAC route system. Based on 23NM lateral separation, the project will use PBCS capabilities to increase capacity. R220 and the existing routes in the Anchorage Oceanic would be moved south to resolve an issue with spacing from the Magadan FIR boundary, followed by the establishment of new routes M-1 (tentative) then M-2 (tentative) between the current NOPAC routes. The discussion focused on when to move to each phase in accordance with the PBCS equipage rate. The original plan was to begin the NOPAC changes in the first quarter of 2020. It was originally decided that 90% of the aircraft operating in NOPAC had to be PBCS approved before the 23 NM spaced routes could be implemented.

2.12 Discussions with the operators and IATA indicated that the 90% PBCS approval level would be reached in early 2021. However after the COVID-19 pandemic began, the PBCS approval level dropped due to an increase in cargo flights in NOPAC. JCAB and the FAA presented data on the projected impacts of implementing 23 NM laterally spaced routes in NOPAC before and after COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, the planned implementation of 23 NM spaced routes would have had minimal impact. However after COVID-19, the aircraft fleet using NOPAC has changed and the impacts would be much greater. The meeting discussed PBCS aircraft approvals and operator plans to obtain more PBCS approvals. IATA committed to contacting their operators and providing updated information on the future plans of Non-PBCS approved operators in NOPAC. This information is important to JCAB and the FAA for developing the timeline to implement 23 NM laterally spaced NOPAC routes.

Others

2.13 The information provided in this paper is a summary of discussion from the IPACG meeting. For more details, visit the IPACG website at:

https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/ato/service_units/mission_support/ato_intl/ipacg/

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) note the activities of IPACG to increase ATC efficiency on the network between Asia and north America; and
- c) discuss additional ways to increase the percentage of PBCS approved aircraft in the Asia Pacific region.

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