



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization

Seventeenth Meeting of the ICAO Aeronautical Information Services – Aeronautical Information Management Implementation Task Force (AAITF/17)

Video Teleconference, 20 – 24 June 2022

Agenda Item 4: Review of Air Navigation Deficiencies in the AIS Field

AIS QUALITY – AIRLINE OBSERVATIONS

(Presented by IATA)

SUMMARY

This paper presents a summary of airline observations of AIS issues or improvements primarily in the Asia and Pacific (APAC) region.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Each year for AAITF meeting IATA seeks feedback from airlines on issues and improvements identified with AIS quality in the region and collates into this summary paper. It includes ongoing long-term issues that are taking longer to fully rectify.

1.2 History has shown that many issues are quickly resolved once identified and discussed in and outside of this forum.

2. DISCUSSION

Infrastructure

2.1 Not a new issue as it's been raised before, there continue to be late or nil publications for major infrastructure projects, i.e. new terminals/aprons, taxiways construction etc. Some have not even provided advanced notice through AIC advising the project implementation plans.

2.2 Globally this issue remains very common, with recent examples observed being new TWYs between other TWYs at one major APAC airport, and a new terminal with associated ground movement areas opened at another. In the latter case, the information had been shared in draft form however the original AIRAC process did not provide a timeline that matched commissioning date of the new asset, and publication was subsequently delayed to a later AIRAC date anyway.

2.3 Other global examples include cases of last-minute SUPs being issued on day of actual opening for new terminals, aprons and stands in several African airports, and in Mexico major TWY works taking place at several airports with no details officially published.

AIS offices – Production capability

2.4 There is a general observation that many AIS offices don't appear to have sufficient qualified staff to produce and amend charts containing Terminal and Approach procedures, aerodrome layout / parking / docking charts etc. Many charts are simply outdated, with AIS being made aware of this but unable to take some sort of corrective action. While encountered in some parts of APAC, the feedback notes it is especially applicable to the Africa regions and so will be raised the same at the upcoming Africa AIM WG meeting on 23rd June.

Trigger NOTAM, NOTAM Monthly Checklist / AIP AMDT Cover sheet / NOTAM Summary

2.5 With respect to access to aeronautical information products, twenty-two (22) States are now providing access via eAIP or digital format and three (3) States share information using email distribution.

2.6 With respect to Trigger NOTAM timeframes used by States within Asia Pacific Region, three (3) States are issuing them two (2) cycles before the AIRAC effective date, and seventeen (17) States are issuing one (1) cycle before the effective date. In several of these cases, the States had not been issuing Trigger NOTAMs as per the ICAO Standards however following constructive communications the changes were implemented.

2.7 Five (5) States within the region are identified as not issuing regular Trigger NOTAMs.

2.8 With respect to AIP Amendment cover sheets, nineteen (19) countries are including them to aid processing and tracking of the amendments, while six (6) countries are not including them.

2.9 End users rely on monthly NOTAM checklists, regular website visits and AIC Checklists to identify when non-AIRC publications and AICs are published. Twenty-five (25) States are issuing a Monthly Checklist, thirteen (13) States issuing a Monthly Checklist listing all in-force AIP SUPs & AICs, and twelve (12) States issuing a Monthly Checklist stating latest publications for AIP SUPs & AICs.

2.10 Feedback noted there are still regular reports of differences in content between published NOTAM Monthly Checklists and NOTAM summaries.

Aerodromes

2.11 There has been a significant number of queries related to parking stands, i.e. missing PCN values, authorized aircraft types unknown, and how aircraft types are identified, e.g.: B747 authorized yet variants B747-100 to B747-800 have very different dimensions.

2.12 Displaced thresholds that drive multiple NOTAMS for RNAV and Precision Approaches are not always usable. This is as a result of some airlines no longer training for 'dive and drive' procedures. In that scenario the crews are not trained to level the aircraft and find a new aim point to the displaced threshold, so VFR weather minimums are used allowing the crew to visually operate to the runway, which can have an operational impact. ATC should be aware that this may be a constraint for some crews.

QCODEs

2.13 Globally, there are still regular reports of inconsistent use of Qcodes, with many States having yet to implement Qcodes combinations as published in DOC 8126, edition 7.

2.14 Countries below were identified recently as using Qcode “QMRCN” combination. States are responding positively to feedback as outlined below.

- Australia = 34 NOTAMS - Response: update in-house process by 10 June
- India = 17 NOTAMS - Response: Staff awareness
- Japan = 18 NOTAMS - Response: AIS updating current process
- Malaysia = 13 NOTAMS - Response: AIS updating current process
- New Zealand = 10 NOTAMS - Pending

2.15 There continue to be reports of issues with states issuing “QXXXX” when a Qcode is available for the subject and condition.

2.16 Additionally, the word “Trial” continues to be used for many new infrastructure NOTAMs in locations. Airlines are needing to take the additional step of issuing company NOTAMs to authorize use of the new infrastructure due to the word “Trial”.

COVID

2.17 Globally, reports are that there are still many NOTAMs including use of the word “COVID” to advise of an interruption, e.g.: ATC frequency unavailable, RWY usage constraints. As the industry recovers from the pandemic it is expected that this will be used more rarely as the reason for interruptions.

AIP SUP

2.18 Some States are using separate number sequencing for AIRAC and Non-AIRAC AIP SUPs, e.g.: AIRAC AIP SUP 01/22 and AIP SUP 01/22. This has resulted in some identification issues observed by flight planning providers.

2.19 In one case the airline recommended to the State’s AIS unit that they maintain a single numbering sequence. The recommendation was accepted in November 2021 and was agreed to be applied from January 2022 however it has now been delayed until January 2023 which results in the issue existing until that time.

2.20 AIP SUPs are also being published containing only the airport name which adds workload to flight planning teams who need to identify the location. This has been raised previously and there has been good success in some cases with States utilising the relevant ICAO Code to make for easy identification.

NOTAM delivery

2.21 Globally, feedback includes continued occurrences of late receipt of NOTAMs. In some global regions this has seen delays of days duration.

2.22 METAR missing elements - any country/entity that generates or distribute their NOTAMs via the FAA may not be aware that these NOTAMs concerning missing METAR elements may not be distributed internationally. The NOTAM may only be captured in the Domestic format and not re-broadcast internationally.

2.23 This becomes an issue on fields where the tower closes and or the weather observer is not present. Because this is such a rare event, dispatchers and pilots may not even be aware that the METAR is missing data elements as in most cases there is no automation to point this out.

PERM and EST NOTAMs

2.24 For the period 10 June 2021 to 9 June 2022 one airline database showed 534 PERM NOTAMs still active after three (3) months for aerodromes just in their network.

2.25 Similarly, for the period 10 June 2021 to 9 June 2022 the same airline's database showed 700 global NOTAMs exceeding "EST" date/time in item C that were still active.

2.26 It is noted that in recent years ICAO has been asking States to review and maintain vigilance on 'old' NOTAMS including PERM NOTAMs and airlines support that continuing so as to reduce the amount of unnecessary active NOTAMs that may cause relevant NOTAMs to be overlooked.

2.27 As an example, one reported issue has been NOTAMs for taxiway works being missed by crews, increasing the risk of the aircraft exiting the runway on closed taxiways or on a taxiway that no longer supports the aircraft group. While the actual NOTAMs are usually in place, the volume of NOTAMs in a briefing has been identified as one of the causes for the information to be missed.

AIS Websites

2.28 There remains feedback of publications on many AIS websites not being maintained. As per quality management processes, a regular review and update program is supported to ensure all available information remains accurate and timely.

2.29 Web-watcher software is being used by more companies to track website changes to resolve an issue of lack of a notification mechanism for all non-AIRAC publications. The web watchers allow predefined checks of AIS websites for changes to AIP publications as waiting for monthly NOTAM checklists is not always ideal for end users and helps avoid staff spending valuable time checking websites unnecessarily.

2.30 During set-up of web-watcher capability, challenges with many AIS websites sites are faced due to firewalls or the way a website is constructed, and workarounds have not been possible. Going forward, further improvements to access AIS websites for automated checking of changes would be a great value to the users.

2.31 There are many states that send email notification on all AIP publications when changes take place, which users are very grateful for, but it's limited to small number of countries.

ARFF

2.32 While ARFF downgrade NOTAMS are generally published, they tend to get lost in the volume of NOTAMS. There needs to be a way of highlighting ARFF reductions so that it's more visible to the Dispatchers/flight crews.

2.33 Annex 6 will shortly make it a requirement for flight crews to be aware of an airport's ARFF levels for the type of flight in question; for PAX flights – Destination, Alternate, ETOP/EDTO alternates, and then their operators' rules for CARGO and Maintenance flights. Consideration could be given to the published ARFF levels being a data element of the ARINC 424, then amended by NOTAM, rather than being an item only found in the AIP, or supplements.

Rocket Launches

2.34 There are numerous cases of rocket launch information for which no graphic of either the launch site or intended re-entry area is depicted. In most cases the Airspace User must enter the NOTAM's Lat/Long coordinates into their flight planning systems in order to better identify the affected zones.

2.35 It should be incumbent upon the launch operators, NOTAM offices and approving government agencies to also supply a simple graphic depicting the launch and re-entry zones for easy compression by dispatchers and pilots.

2.36 This is particularly important when pre-briefing crews who will be operating long haul flights either during the launch window or may be delayed into the launch window.

States charging for AIP subscriptions in APAC region

2.37 There are seven (7) States within APAC that are charging airlines for AIP subscriptions – one State increased this charge by 158% compared to the previous year.

2.38 AIS should be a component of the cost base used for calculating ANS charges by a State as part of the expected service delivery performance required by Airspace Users. That way, costs are negotiated under meaningful consultation as per ICAO guidelines which mitigates risk of the charges being over-inflated.

Conclusion

2.39 Airspace Users appreciate the ongoing efforts by States to improve the quality and scope of AIS. Airlines will continue to provide feedback to individual service providers and into forums such as this one as past history has shown good communication between all parties has been a successful catalyst for rapidly resolving issues and supporting continued improvement.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper; and
- b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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