Sixth Meeting of the Aerodromes Operations and Planning Sub-Group (AOP/SG/6)

Video Teleconference, 27 to 30 June 2022

Agenda Item 8: Any other business

ALPHA NUMERIC CALL SIGNS

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper presents information on recent and planned activities relating to the use of Alpha Numeric Call Signs to mitigate call sign confusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The need for, and regional outcomes related to, the development of an Alpha Numeric Call Sign project for the Asia/Pacific Region has been most recently presented in:

- The Fourth Meeting of the Aerodromes Operations and Planning Sub-Group (AOP/SG/4, November 2020) (**AOP/SG/4 WP/21**);
- APANPIRG/31 (December 2020);
- The Third Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Aerodrome Design and Operations Task Force (AP-ADO/TF/3, February 2022) and
- The *Safety Significance and Implementation of Alphanumeric Call Signs* webinar, jointly conducted by CANSO and ACI, and supported by IATA, held on 01 June 2022.

2. DISCUSSION

APANPIRG and Contributory Body Discussions

2.1 AOP/SG/4 was informed or the Alpha Numeric Call Sign initiative in **AOP/SG/4 WP/21**). Radiotelephony call sign confusion had been identified for many decades as the root cause of a significant number of airspace incidents including Large Height Deviations (LHDs) and runway conflictions, when an ATC instruction was either provided incorrectly to, or acknowledged incorrectly by, and aircraft with a similar call sign to that intended.

2.2 Most recently the AP-ADO/TF/3 meeting was also informed of the initiative in **AP-ADO/TF/3 WP/7** (ACI, CANSO, IATA and ICAO) and **ADO/TF/3 Flimsy 1**. ***Conclusions APANPIRG 27/15 and ATM/SG/5-5 and 5-6*** referred. The project had commenced in 2016, when APANPIRG and its ATM Sub-Group had been informed of the safety issues associated with call sign confusion, and of the successful implementation of ANCS in the ICAO Europe (EUR) and Middle East (MID) Regions.

2.3 APANPIRG/31 (14 – 16 December 2020) had been informed that the 25th Meeting of the Regional Airspace Safety Monitoring Advisory Group (RASMAG/25, 27 – 30 October 2020) had noted similar call signs had been a causal factor in several Category D (ATC system loop error) Large Height Deviation (LHD events). It had been noted by RASMAG/25 that, while ANCS had been successfully implemented in the EUR and MID Regions, the project had not been able progress in APAC. One of the reasons for this was the reluctance of aerodrome operators to implement change until an automated tool was available to accommodate alphanumeric call signs. Consequently, ***Conclusion APANPIRG/31/11: Alphanumeric Call Sign Initiative***, urged leading Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) and aerodrome operators, in coordination with ACI and CANSO, to consider a trial to identify and overcome any barriers for the implementation of ANCS in the APAC Region.

2.4 The ADO-TF/3 meeting was provided with some examples of Alphanumeric callsigns in use, as observed in publicly available flight tracking websites:

Operator	ICAO Call Sign (conventional)	ICAO Alpha Numeric Call Sign	IATA Flight Number
Emirates	UAE607	-	EK607
Emirates	UAE408	UAE58E	EK408
Qatar Airways	QTR672	QTR71C	QR672
Qatar Airways	QTR663	QTR43F	QR663
Ryanair	RYR9647	RYR9QV	FR9647
Ryanair	RYR3186	-	FR3186

Table 1: Alpha Numeric Call Sign Examples 02 February 2022 (2350 UTC).

2.5 AP-ADO/TF/3 noted that airport operators should anticipate the possibility of future State regulatory developments requiring the use of ANCS to mitigate call sign confusion-related air safety incidents.

Safety Significance and Implementation of Alphanumeric Call Signs Webinar,

2.6 The webinar included presentations by ICAO, Qatar Airways, Hamad International Airport Doha, Japan Air Navigation Services, and Veovo. The presentation material is available on the CANSO website at:

https://canso.fra1.digitaloceanspaces.com/uploads/2022/04/CANSO_Regional-Focus_Safety-Significance-and-Implementation-of-Alphanumeric-Call-Signs_slide-deck.pdf

2.7 **Figure 1** illustrates the airports in the Qatar Airways network where alphanumeric call signs are currently used.

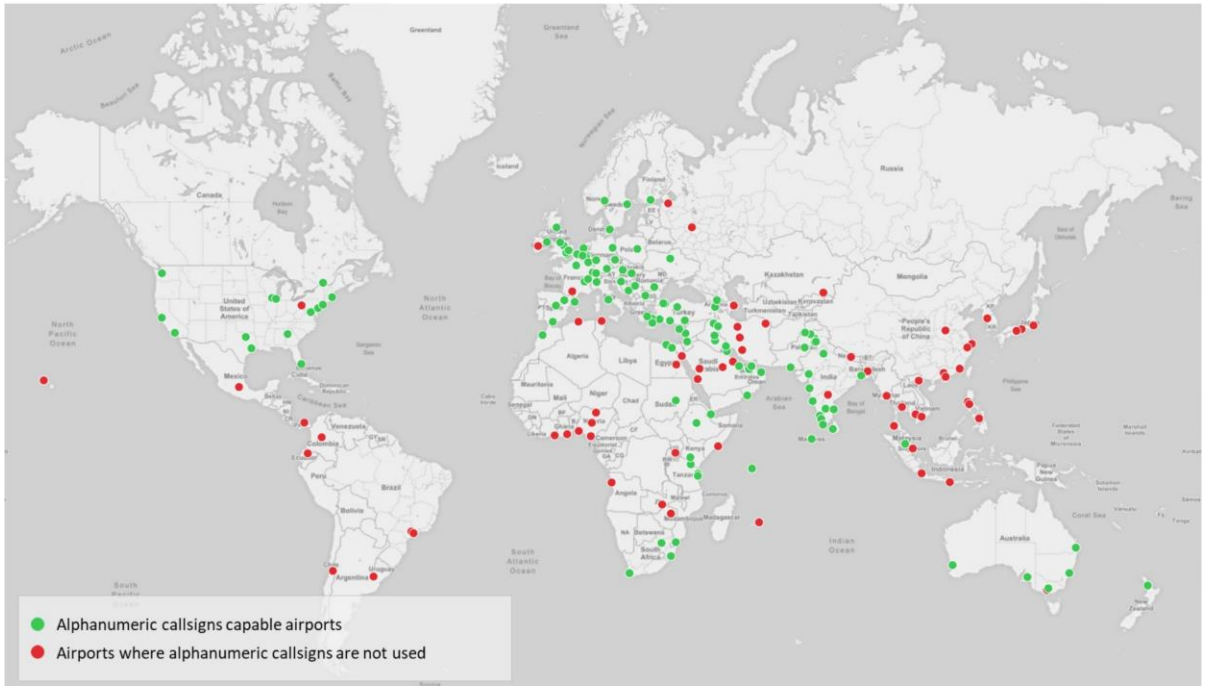

Figure 1: Alphanumeric Capable Airports 2022 (Source: Qatar Airways)

2.8 The information provided by Hamad International Airport, Doha, included the following safety-significant benefits of alphanumeric call signs from the perspective of airport operations:

1. Avoid miscommunication between ATC and flight crews. Similarities between call sings of the same airline or similarities between more than one airline;
2. Reduce risk that may result on flights parking on wrong parking stand;
3. Communication accuracy between AOCC and ATC via phone;
4. Improve the accuracy of communication between Airfield OPS and ATCO during low visibility;
5. Better communication between AOCC and Airfield OPS team on live flights
6. Monitoring of VHF during peak times becomes easier, hence accuracy of information and response improve

Follow-Up Actions

2.9 Following the webinar, CANSO made enquiries on the availability of the EUROCONTROL Call Sign Similarity Tool (CSST) for use by aircraft operators in other regions. The CSST is available to out of area non-European users. Discussions within the CSS user group on the integration of increased non-European use of the tool are ongoing. An overview of the project may be found at https://www.eurocontrol.int/service/call-sign-similarity-service.

2.10 The use of alphanumeric call signs will be presented to the APAC Regional Aviation Safety Group (RASG-APAC) for consideration for inclusion as a Safety Enhancement Initiative (SEI) in the Regional Aviation Safety Plan 2022 – 2025.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

a) note the information contained in this paper;

b) note the use of acceptance/use of alphanumeric call signs at airports in the Asia/Pacific Region, and the benefits of their use in airport operations; and

c) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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