



International Civil Aviation Organization

ICAO

**Tenth Meeting of the Air Traffic Management Sub-Group
(ATM/SG/10) of APANPIRG**

Video Teleconference, 17 – 21 October 2022

Agenda Item 5: ATM Systems (Modernization, Seamless ATM, CNS, ATFM)

ALPHA NUMERIC CALL SIGNS

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper presents an update on the issue of call sign confusion, and the use of Alpha Numeric Call Signs in mitigation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Asia/Pacific Alpha Numeric Call Sign project was initiated to help mitigate the known safety issues associated with call-sign confusion/conflict, given the continued significant growth of air traffic in the region

1.2 The project was endorsed by ATM/SG/4 in 2016 and subsequently by APANPIRG/27 in the same year, enabling Phase 1 of the project to commence with a regional survey of the current capability to accept and process alphanumeric call signs.

1.3 Phase 2 of the project, involving system testing for ANSPs (ATC systems, billing systems, etc.), airports and regulators (overflight approvals, etc.) was supported by a Conclusion of ATM/SG/5 in August 2017.

1.4 meetings of the Regional Airspace Safety Monitoring Advisory Group (RASMAG) in recent years have identified call sign confusion as a contributing factor in Large Height Deviation (LHD) events.

2. DISCUSSION

ATM/SG/5 Outcomes

2.1 In ATM/SG/5 WP/17, IATA proposed to commence Phase Two of the Asia/Pacific Alphanumeric Call Sign project. Etihad Airways had agreed to be the airline lead, building on their successful involvement in a similar project in the ICAO Middle East Region. ATM/SG/5 agreed to the following Conclusion:

Conclusion ATMSG/5-6: Asia Pacific Alphanumeric Call-Sign Project

That,

- 1. Phase Two of the Alphanumeric Call Sign project be commenced, using the project plan at ATM/SG/5 WP/17 Attachment A and with the participation of Australia, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka; and*
- 2. the results of Phase Two of the project be reported to ATM/SG/7.*

2.2 The project plan was subsequently published, and remains available on the Asia/Pacific Regional Office eDocuments web-page at <https://www.icao.int/APAC/Pages/eDocs.aspx> (ATM tab, Messages section).

2.3 An update of general information on alphanumeric call signs was provided to ATM/SG/6 (August 2018) by IATA and the United Arab Emirates. No project Phase Two results were reported to ATM/SG/6 or ATM/SG/7

RASMAG/25 and ATM/SG/8 Outcomes

2.4 The following excerpt from the meeting report of ATM/SG/8 (November 2020) summarizes discussion of the subject, in the context of RASMAG/25 outcomes reported to the meeting under **ATM/SG/8 WP/05** (FIT-Asia and RASMAG Outcomes):

3.15 *In response to a query from ICAO, IATA clarified that its similar call sign initiative successfully implemented in the MID Region had not been able to progress in the 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. Noting the grave safety risks from such occurrences, RASMAG/25 had agreed to the following Draft Conclusion, which was endorsed by the AOP/SG/4 and the ATM/SG/8:*

Draft Conclusion RASMAG/25-3: Alphanumeric Call Sign Initiative

2.5 APANPIRG/31 (December 2020) subsequently agreed to the following Conclusion as drafted by RASMAG/25 and endorsed by AOP/SG/4 and ATM/SG/8:

Conclusion APANPIRG/31/11: Alphanumeric Call Sign Initiative

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 and ATM/SG Conclusions 5-5 and 5-6 regarding the Asia/Pacific Alpha Numeric Call-Sign (ANCS) 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)*

2.6 Consequently, ATM/SG/9 (November 2021) updated Action Item 5/5 of the ATM/SG Task List (**Figure 1**).

ACTION ITEM & PRIORITY	DESCRIPTION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	STATUS	REMARKS
<u>5/5</u>	Phase 2 of the Alphanumeric Call Sign Project report to ATM/SG/7	<u>ATM/SG/9</u> <u>ATM/SG/10</u>	<u>IATA/States/</u> <u>CANSO/ACI</u>	Open	<u>ATM/SG/9 update:</u> <i>Conclusion</i> <u>APANPIRG/31/11 urged aerodrome operators, in coordination with CANSO and ACI, to consider a trial to identify and overcome barriers, with a view to developing a project for the APAC Region.</u>

Figure 1: Excerpt from ATM/SG Task List

2.7 As a result of offline consultation on the Action Item between ACI, CANSO, IATA and ICAO, a regional webinar was conducted with a view to provide information on the need for Alpha Numeric Call Signs to mitigate call sign confusion in ATC communications, implementation challenges, and benefits to all stakeholders. The webinar, hosted by CANSO as a joint activity with ACI, and supported by IATA, was held on 01 June 2022. The webinar details and presentations are available on the CANSO website at:

<https://canso.org/event/regional-focus-safety-significance-and-implementation-of-alphanumeric-call-signs/>

2.8 In follow-up consultation, the webinar organizers considered that development of a Safety Enhancement Initiative (SEI) for inclusion in the APAC Regional Aviation Safety Plan may encourage APAC stakeholders to trial and then implement the use of alpha numeric call signs.

2.9 There may also be benefit in including a related regional planning element in the APAC Seamless ANS Plan.

2.10 Accordingly, the meeting is invited to agree to an update to the ATM/SG Task List, to develop a SEI for inclusion in the APAC RASP, and to consider the inclusion of a regional planning element in the Seamless ANS Plan

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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