International Civil Aviation Organization

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Agenda Item 4: Asia/Pacific and inter-regional SAR planning, coordination and cooperation

ACTIVITIES FOR REDUCING ACCIDENTAL ACTIVATION OF ELT

(Presented by Japan)

SUMMARY

This paper presents activities for reducing accidental activation of ELT in Japan. Tokyo RCC will continue to address the preventive activities in order to reduce the number of accidental transmissions. Japan invites APSAR members to share their experiences with all of us and discuss what constitutes effective and efficient activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Whenever Tokyo RCC receives notification of receipt of an ELT signal from the relevant organizations, Tokyo RCC will be sure to confirm the presence or absence of a flight in an emergency or distress condition within Tokyo SRR.

1.2 However, it is difficult to confirm that there are no aircraft in distress and this has always been a time consuming process for Tokyo RCC. Reducing the number of accidental activation of an ELT would save time for such confirmation tasks and the activities for reducing accidental activation is a significant matter.

2. DISCUSSION

Background

2.1 Tokyo RCC has the capability to access information on all aircraft with destinations and/or departures within Tokyo SRR (Ref. APSAR/WG/7 – IP/03). However, if the ELT signal is a 121.5MHZ beacon, this is a homing beacon with no identification, so Tokyo RCC cannot identify the aircraft without confirming which aircraft transmitted the ELT signal, which always takes time for information gathering and confirmation.

2.2 According to an internal survey conducted by Tokyo RCC, it has handled an annual average of 370 ELT signals over the past five years. In approximately 30% of these cases, the aircraft that transmitted the ELT signal could be identified, and in the remaining cases the source of the signal was unknown. The total time spent on confirmation was found to be approximately 270 hours last year.

2.3 In all cases, Tokyo RCC is required to make tough decisions regarding the termination of confirmations. However, it is difficult to confirm that there are no aircraft in distress, and this has always been a time consuming process for Tokyo RCC.

Importance of reducing the number of accidental activation

2.4 Reducing the number of accidental activation of an ELT would save time for such confirmation tasks. It could also reduce the risk to put pressure on our original work when a distress case actually occurs. In addition, the time required for confirmation could be used for other activities such as education and training programs to improve the skills of Tokyo RCC staff.

2.5 Therefore, Tokyo RCC implemented the following programs in cooperation with the regulatory division of JCAB, which oversees safe operation, with the aim to reduce accidental ELT activation cases.

- Safe operation seminar

  Participants were mainly aerial work companies, private pilots and government sectors operating aircraft. Seminars were held in five locations throughout Japan. Tokyo RCC provided an overview of SAR activities, the importance of preventive measures of false activation of an ELT, and also the contact information and procedures in the event of an ELT activation by mistake.

- Seminar for small aircraft maintenance engineers

  There is a possibility of accidentally activating an ELT during aircraft maintenance. Tokyo RCC explained and reminded the importance of prevention of this problem as well as the contact information and procedures to be followed if an ELT signal has been accidentally transmitted during maintenance.

2.6 Tokyo RCC will continue to address the effective preventive activities by analyzing the situations in which accidental transmissions occur in order to reduce the number of accidental transmissions.

Reference information

- Functional testing of ELT

  Japanese law requires that those who intend to conduct ELT functional testing must notify the relevant organizations such as Tokyo RCC of the timing of the testing in advance. The ELT signal is allowed to be transmitted from 00 to 05 minutes every hour, and 25 to 30 minutes every hour in case of an urgent situation. Transmissions of no more than 5 seconds per test are allowed. If the timing of ELT signals are within such time zone, the confirmation process will be easier.

- 406MHZ beacon

  Tokyo RCC has the beacon identification data. When 406MHZ beacon is received, it can be quickly identified.

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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