



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization

**Fifteenth Meeting of the Asia/Pacific Air Traffic Flow Management Steering Group (ATFM/SG/15)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 28 April – 02 May 2025

---

## **Agenda Item 4: Review of Current ATFM Operations and Problem Areas**

### **ADDRESSING OF FLIGHT PLANS AND MISSING DEP MESSAGES**

(Presented by Secretariat)

#### **SUMMARY**

This paper presents an update on the issue of missing departure messages, as discussed at multiple meetings of the Air Traffic Flow Management Steering Group (ATFM/SG) and ATM Sub-Group.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 An analysis of missing DEP messages was conducted in 2017, in response to the following APANPIRG Conclusion:

***Conclusion APANPIRG/27/12: Origination and Distribution of Departure (DEP) Messages*** That, recognizing the importance of AFTN departure (DEP) messages in the management and coordination of flight plans in both manual and automated ATM environments, ICAO be requested to:

1. *Conduct an analysis of the incidence of non-receipt of DEP messages required by ICAO Doc 4444 Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS-ATM) Section 11.4.2.2;*
2. *Request that States failing to ensure correct transmission of DEP messages promptly take corrective action and report the status of corrective actions to the ICAO APAC Regional Office by 30 April 2017; and*
3. *Raise APANPIRG Air Navigation Deficiencies against failure by States to comply with Doc 4444 Section 11.4.2.2, at APANPIRG/28.*

1.2 ATM/SG/5 in August 2017 had requested that ongoing analysis be expanded to include missing FPL messages. The March 2018 analysis presented to ATFM/SG/8 resulted in APANPIRG Air Navigation Deficiencies being raised against several Asia/Pacific Region States. An APAC State Letter was also sent to non-APAC States that were demonstrated by the analysis to be systemically failing to send DEP messages.

## 2. DISCUSSION

### Addressing of FPL and Other Related ATS Messages

2.1 ICAO Doc 4444 Procedures for Air Navigation Services – Air Traffic Management (PANS-ATM) specifies in section 11.2.1.1.1 that messages for ATS purposes (including FPL and associated ATS messages) shall be originated by the appropriate ATS units, except that, through special local arrangements, ATS units may delegate the responsibility for originating movement messages to the pilot, the operator, or its designated representative. Many airlines, accordingly, distribute FPL messages direct to concerned ATS units rather than submitting the flight plan to the air traffic services reporting office for onwards distribution (Doc 4444 section 4.4.2).

2.2 PANS-ATM 11.4.2.2.2 further specifies that a Filed Flight Plan (FPL) message shall be sent to, inter alia:

- The Area Control Centre (ACC) or flight information center serving the control area or FIR within which the departure aerodrome is situated;
- All centers in charge of each FIR or upper FIR along the route; and
- The aerodrome control tower at the destination aerodrome.

2.3 PANS-ATM further specifies in section 11.2.1.2.3.3 that the following three letter designators (forming part of the AFTN address, together with the relevant ICAO four-letter location indicator and a supplementary letter, usually X) shall be used when addressing FPL and other ATS messages to ATS units:

If the message is relevant to an IFR flight    ZQZ(X)

If the message is relevant to a VFR flight    ZFZ(X)

Aerodrome control tower                            ZTZ(X)

Air traffic services reporting office            ZPZ(X)

***Other three-letter designators shall not be used for that purpose.***

2.4 There are multiple examples of States in the Asia/Pacific Region specifying in their Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) Section ENR 1.11 that FPL be addressed other than in accordance with PANS-ATM. The specification of non-compliant addressing requirements in State AIP (and, in some cases, in NOTAM) contributes to the non-receipt of FPL, DEP, and other related ATS messages.

2.5 In this regard, the meeting is reminded of the following Conclusion agreed by ATM/SG/7 (2019):

### ***Conclusion ATM/SG/7-5: ATS Message Reception and Handling***

*Noting that incorrect flight plan addressing requirements published by States in AIP ENR 1.11 contribute to the non-reception of flight plans and associated ATS messages, and that simple technology solutions are readily available to permit redistribution of messages to all necessary internal units and organizations, States are urged to:*

*1. ensure that, in accordance with PANS-ATM 11.4.2.2.2 all FPL and associated ATS messages that are addressed in accordance with PANS-ATM to the centre in charge of*

*each FIR along the route and the destination aerodrome control tower, are correctly received and redistributed to all necessary ATS units by the receiving State;*

*2. note that, as specified in PANS-ATM 11.2.1.2.3.3, the correct address for the centre in charge of the FIR is [FIR location indicator] ZQZX, and other indicators shall not be used;*

*3. remove flight plan addressing requirements that do not comply with the above PANS-ATM provisions from AIP ENR 1.11; and*

*4. ensure that all three letter designators used in addresses are correctly registered in ICAO Doc 8585.*

2.6 ICAO Doc 8585 (Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities and Services) provides a globally standardized three-letter designator for an Air Traffic Flow Control Unit: ZDZ. However, external originators of ATS messages (including FPL, DEP, etc.) are ICAO-compliant when addressing the messages to the Centre in Charge of any FIR entered (ZQZ for IFR flights) and the destination ATC Tower (ZTZ). The forwarding of ATS messages to any relevant ATFM unit is the responsibility of the Centre in Charge of the FIR, and not the originator of the ATS message.

2.7 There are also cases of States implementing the use of three-letter designators that are not assigned to them in ICAO Doc 8585 Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities and Services, but are in fact assigned to other States, authorities, or aircraft operating agencies.

2.8 It was noted that several States had amended their AIP Section ENR 1.11 to comply with the PANS-ATM provisions more closely.

2.9 The meeting is invited to note that ICAO APAC Office will continue to encourage improved compliance with the provisions of PANS-ATM through direct contact with States, and if necessary, through APANPIRG Air Navigation Deficiencies.

#### Missing DEP Messages Analysis

2.10 Following the analysis of missing DEP messages conducted in 2018, ATFM/SG/8 discussed steps to be taken to address the issue. State Letters were consequently sent by the ICAO Asia/Pacific Regional Office as follows:

- State Letters to APAC Administrations for which APANPIRG Air Navigation Deficiencies were proposed for non-compliance with the provisions of PANS-ATM (subsequently agreed by APANPIRG);
- A State Letter to all other APAC Administrations, and to non-APAC Administrations through their accredited ICAO Regional Offices, where the analysis indicated systemic failure to send DEP messages.

2.11 A further 24-hour data gathering activity was conducted on 14 June 2019. The planned data gathering and analysis from 2020 to 2022 was not conducted due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on traffic volumes.

2.12 The original criterion used for the ANS Deficiency was the failure to send DEP messages for 10 flights or more. This criterion did not adequately capture poor performance from States with low numbers of international departures. It was therefore agreed by ATFM/SG and ATM/SG that the criteria will be five percent of flights. However, States with very low numbers of international departures, i.e., less than 20 per month, should be excluded from the Deficiency List due to the small sample size, but will be formally contacted by ICAO, and monitored closely.

APAC Missing DEP message Data Analysis (November 2024-January 2025)

2.13 The APAC regional missing DEP messages analysis was conducted in February 2025 based on the ATFM/SG/14 action item. Two States, viz., India, and Thailand, provided data to ICAO on the number of FPLs received and number of missing DEP messages for flights originating from Maldives. The summary of the analysis is as shown below.

Month	Data	India	Thailand
November 2024	No of FPL received	916	59
	Missing DEP Messages	118	NIL
	% age of Missing Dep Messages	<12.88%	NA
December 2024	No of FPL received	1158	75
	Missing DEP Messages	303	NIL
	% age of Missing Dep Messages	<28.6%	NA
January 2025	No of FPL received	1059	85
	Missing DEP Messages	948	2
	% age of Missing Dep Messages	<89.5%	< 2.3%

2.14 The ICAO secretariat, based on the analysis, concluded that more data is needed for review of existing ANS Deficiency of missing DEP messages against Maldives.

2.15 ICAO secretariat will again approach States and Administrations to provide data of missing DEP messages in respect of flight originating from Maldives.

### 3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

a) note:

- i) the ICAO Doc 4444 PANS-ATM procedures for the addressing of FPL and associated ATS messages;
- ii) the contribution of incorrect addressing requirements published in AIP ENR 1.11, to missing FPL and associated ATS messages including DEP;
- iii) the potential for APANPIRG Air Navigation Deficiencies, where appropriate, in cases where AIP ENR 1.11 does not comply with PANS-ATM

- b) comply with *conclusion ATM/SG/7-5*: ATS Message Reception and Handling;
- c) take all steps to examine processes and system configuration, to improve performance in DEP message transmission; and
- d) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

— END —