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Resilient Skies

Sheikh Zayed Air Navigation Centre – UAE GCAA

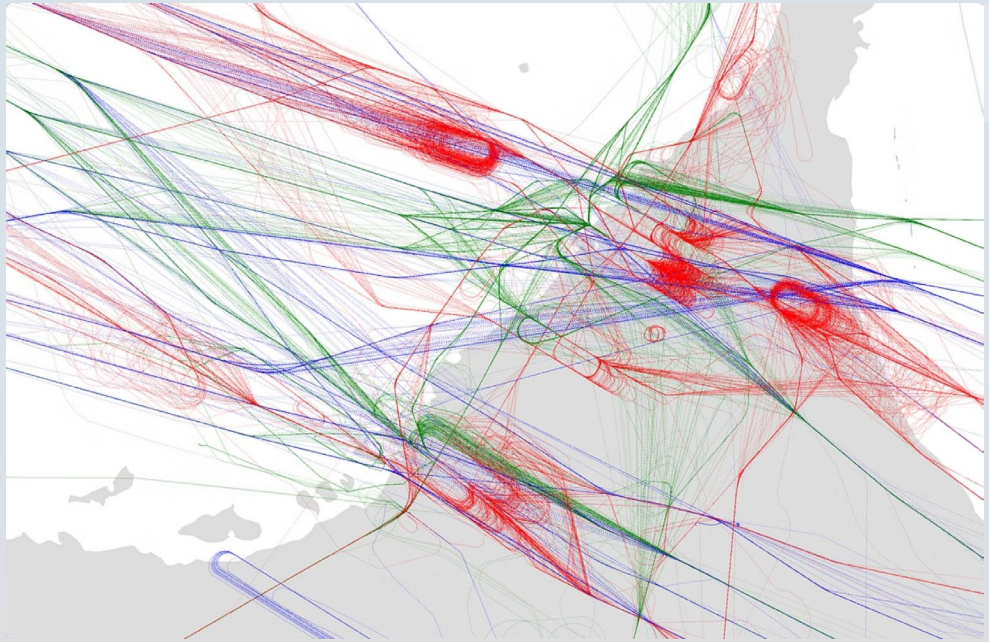


Scale of Normal Operating Conditions – Emirates ACC

14 ACC sectors

3,336 Movements on 16th January

3,242 Average daily movements in January







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Readiness Elevated

Before the Disruption

Maturity Through Experience

- Operational experience and learning from the previous disruptions.
- Emergency Security Control of Air Traffic (ESCAT) Framework

National Resilience

- Strategic Infrastructure Investments and Readiness
- Tabletop Exercises and scenario planning





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The Disruption





A response that evolved with the situation

The disruption unfolded in distinct phases, each introducing new operational demands and requiring adaptive responses from the Emirates ACC and the entire aviation community.

Phase 1

Activate

Enable contingency arrangements, coordinate with stakeholders, and establish demand controls.

Phase 2

Stabilize

Manage arriving traffic, holding and diversions while disruptions continue.

Phase 3

Adapt

Adjust routes, sector configurations as more airspace becomes available and airport operations stabilize.

Phase 4

Sustain

Maintain safe air traffic services and keep operations running throughout an extended disruption.





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What Went Well

Collaborative Spirit

A shared national response

National government entities, companies and stakeholders worked together in a harmonised efficient manner

One operating picture

Airlines, airports and adjacent ANSPs shared demand and constraints.

National and regional coordination

Cross-functional teams balanced capacity and demand daily.





What Went Well

New Era of Civil-Military Collaboration



Coordination in action

Direct coordination between MoD and SZC enabled timely airspace updates, rapid route activation and flexible emergency plans that adapted as the situation escalated or de-escalated.

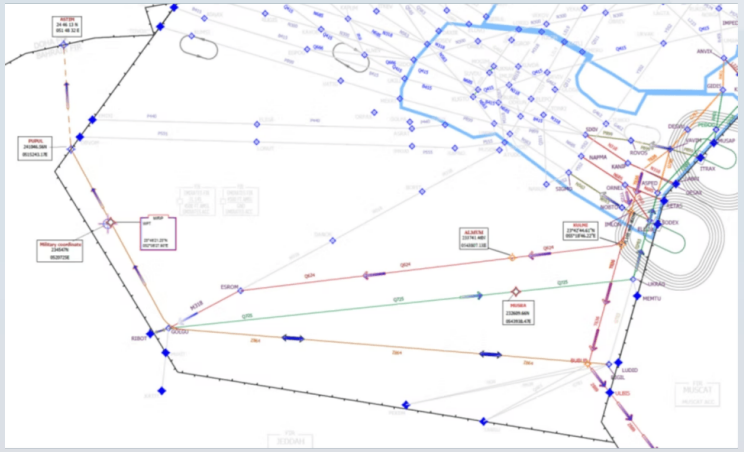




Managing Capacity Within Safety Boundaries

Adapt the operation

Flexible sectorization adapted to real-time traffic distribution and controllers workload.



Control demand

ATC sectors were redesigned to accommodate new traffic flows. Demand caps, ground delays and miles-in-trail restrictions kept traffic within safe capacity limits. Traffic was spread across available corridors to avoid congestion.

Reassess continuously

Workload, sector loads, regional constraints supported the capacity assessments.





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Resilience Beyond Airspace

Human Factors

Wellness and fatigue-management practices supported air traffic controllers (ATCOs).

Systems

Anti-jamming measures reduced effects on GPS reliant systems during interference

Validation

Planned and unplanned relocations validated facilities, systems, people and procedures.

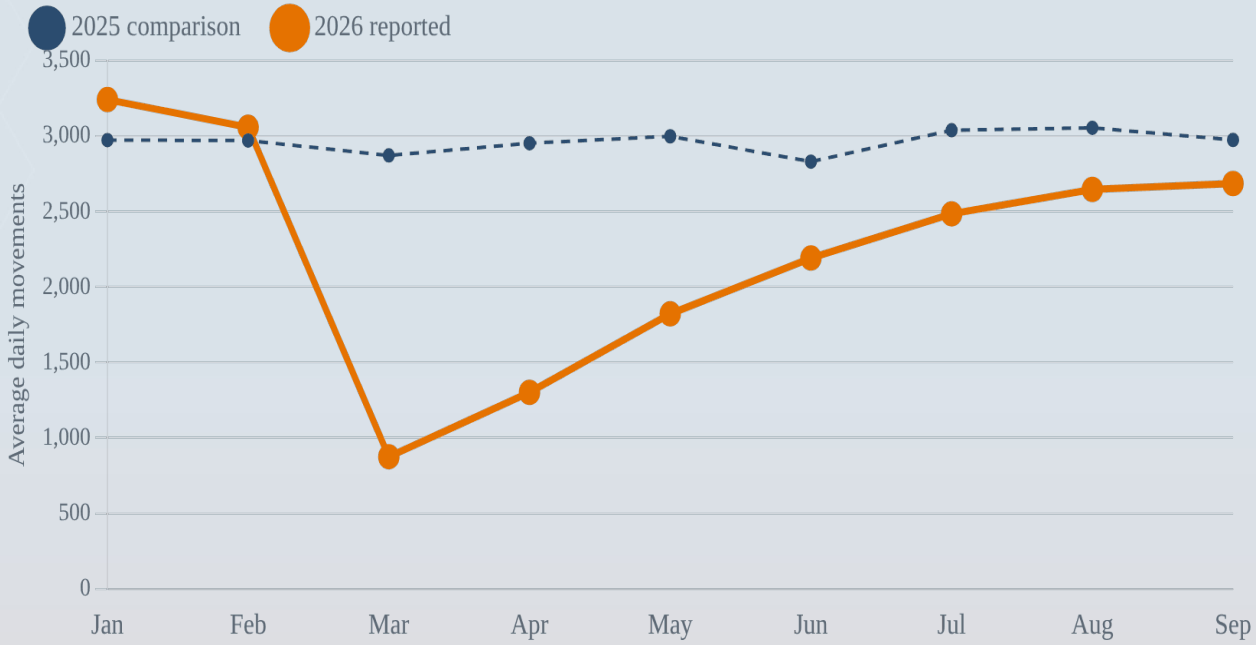
Competency

Flexible and Hybrid competency framework for ATCOs to compensate for traffic reduction.





Disruption to Recovery



875

Mar 2026
Average daily movement

875

Sep 2026
Average daily movement

3.07×

Fold increase

Lessons Learned and Future Readiness

1. **Preparation Matters:** Contingency frameworks, pre-planned routes, and exercised procedures determine how fast and how effectively a response begins. Investment before the event is non-negotiable

2. **Collaboration Is Essential:** Pre-established relationships with airlines, airports, military, and adjacent ANSPs cannot be improvised under pressure — they must be built and maintained.

3. **Flexibility Creates Capacity:** Dynamic sectorization, route flexibility, and adaptive flow management consistently unlocked capacity that rigid procedures would have left unused

4. **Continuous Adaptation:** Operational posture must evolve in step with the situation — static plans degrade; adaptive teams succeed





Collaboration is the Formula for Success

Resilience is not simply absorbing disruption.
It is adapting safely while keeping the system functioning.

Resilience, collaboration, and operational agility enabled Emirates ACC to maintain safe and efficient operations throughout a sustained regional airspace disruption.

Resilience

Robust frameworks and trained teams absorbed disruption without loss of service delivery

Collaboration

A whole-of-system response across civil, military, and airline partners made the difference

Agility

The ability to adapt continuously — in real time — was the defining operational capability



