



International Civil Aviation Organization

The Sixth Meeting of the APANPIRG ATM Sub-Group

(ATM/SG/6)

(Hong Kong, China, 30 July – 03 August 2018)

Agenda Item 4: ATM Systems (Modernization, Seamless ATM, CNS, ATFM)

**CURRENT STATUS OF ALPHA-NUMERIC ATC CALL SIGNS USED IN THE UAE AND
FUTURE REQUIREMENTS TO THE ATM SYSTEMS**

(Presented by United Arab Emirates)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the current status of the usage of alpha-numeric ATC Call Signs since implementation in the UAE in 2017 in compliance with UAE NASAC WG/7 activities and MIDANPIRG15 Conclusion 15/2 CALL SIGN SIMILARITY PROVISIONS AND GUIDELINES. With the increased use of alpha-numeric Call Signs, call sign conflicts/similarities will continue to exist and ANSPs should place increased emphasis on the detection/alerting of call sign conflicts before they occur. It is suggested that ANSPs prepare unified procedures if/when potential exists. Also, Future Air Traffic Management systems should provide a ‘built-in’ detection and alerting tool to Air Traffic Controllers.

Actions by the meeting are in paragraph 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The presence of similar call signs by aircraft operating in the same area, at the same time, and on the same frequency may at times give rise to potential or actual confusion/misunderstanding between pilots and ATCOs. The resultant impact can potentially result in errors leading to safety related incidents.

1.2 The UAE GCAA established the “Call Sign Similarity” Working Group, comprising of representatives from the UAE’s Regulators, ANSPs, Airports and Airlines.

1.3 The objective of the ‘Call Sign Similarity’ Working Group is to provide recommendations in order to minimize the risk of Call sign confusion and procedures for reporting and managing occurrences (potential and actual).

1.4 One of the results of the working group is the introduction of alphanumeric callsigns by some of the UAE based airlines (instead of commercial flight number) which provides an additional level of protection from callsign confusion.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Since being introduced in 2017, the U.A.E. Airlines have allocated an alpha-numeric ATC Callsign to an increasing number of scheduled flights.

2.2 The U.A.E. GCAA and the U.A.E. Airlines sincerely appreciate the support of the ANSPs, the airports and their CAAs to implement, accept and fully support the use of alpha-numeric ATC Call Signs in the ICAO Middle East Region.

2.3 The initiative of the U.A.E. Airlines to allocate flights with an alpha-numeric ATC Call Sign is a success story. For example: In Emirates Airline the number and rates of Air Safety Reports that deal with Call Sign Confusion has decreased by 45% since implementation of August 1st, 2017.

2.4 The U.A.E. Airlines now allocate flights to/from destinations in every region with an alpha-numeric ATC Call Sign. The Air Traffic Controller can have the flexibility to choose between Alpha-numeric callsign or the commercial callsign. The billing system and other databases will not be affected.

2.5 Even with a further increase of the usage of alpha-numeric Call Signs, call sign conflicts/similarities will continue to exist and the work on the mitigation of call sign conflicts/similarity is by far not finished yet. ANSPs now need to put an emphasis on the detection of call sign conflicts, before they occur as well as unifying mitigation procedures in the event of call sign similarity.

2.6 These unified procedures should apply between ATC sectors as well as neighboring Air Traffic Service Units (ATSU) to accommodate tactical changes of call signs from one sector to the other.

2.7 The ATM system providers need to be challenged with this early detection of upcoming call sign conflicts and similarities, as systems and tools are required to identify those. Future ATM systems should have a 'built-in' detection and alerting tool.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to encourage States to:

- a) note the information in the IP;
- b) note the UAE initiative of establishing a Callsign Similarity Task Force within its national environment;
- c) note the importance of the coordination between neighbouring ATSUs to work on unified procedures between ATC sectors in order to accommodate tactical changes of call signs from one sector to the other; and
- d) note the need of the development of a 'built-in' detection and alerting tool when building ATM systems where possible.