



DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION CONFERENCE ON A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR AVIATION SAFETY

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Theme 1: The Status of aviation safety today

Topic 1.3: Initiatives by States and industry

ACHIEVING SAFETY OVERSIGHT COMPLIANCE THROUGH ECONOMIES OF SCALE IN CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES

(Presented by COCESNA on behalf of its Member States)

SUMMARY

This paper presents a brief account of the Central American regional initiative that led to the creation of the Central American Agency for Safety (ACSA), its evolution into a regional safety oversight organization and its future plans as it looks at the possibility of becoming an autonomous Central American audit authority. The paper discusses the obstacles faced and emphasizes the benefits of pooling resources in a particular region of the world towards achieving compliance with international safety Standards in the field of civil aviation. It also outlines a vision for continued support and future plans as the world moves towards safety management systems and a corresponding approach to auditing.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In the recent past, the global civil aviation community has become more conscious of the importance for individual States to achieve higher levels of safety oversight in civil aviation. The growth in the industry, driven by a rise in demand for air transportation services and rapid technological advancement, created a growth in safety concerns. Competitive considerations and a lack of adequate resources at the individual level prompted a number of States in the Central American Region to search for ways and means in order to meet their safety oversight obligations and achieve compliance with the international Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).

¹ English and Spanish versions provided by COCESNA.

2. ORIGIN AND MISSION DEVELOPMENT

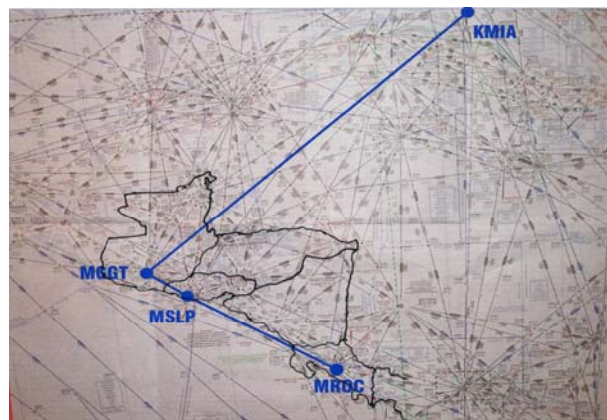
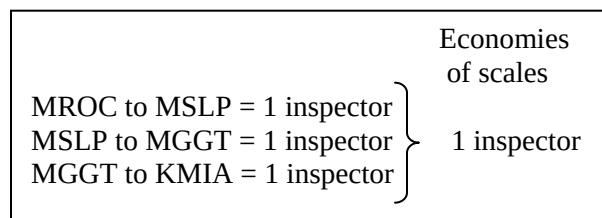
2.1 Recognizing their common threats and needs, and sharing a common cultural, geographical and a linguistic background, the Directors General of Civil Aviation in the Central American countries met in 1960 and decided to pool resources to attain their common goal of improving the quality of civil aviation. The Central American Corporation for Air Navigation Services (COCESNA) was born with a vision to attaining high safety levels. In 2000, the Directive Council of COCESNA decided to establish the Central American Safety Agency (ACSA) as a dependency of COCESNA that would cater to its member states. ACSA would be responsible for the recruitment, training and equipping of inspectors who would be able to help States in conducting safety oversight obligations. ACSA is based in Costa Rica and serves the six Member States of COCESNA (Belize, Costa Rica, El-Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua).

2.2 As mentioned above, ACSA's mission was to provide support to the member countries, recommend actions, and assist in the implementation and compliance with international SARPs. Things were not easy in the beginning. Obsolete national laws and the lack of proper regulations were a major problem that had to be addressed up front. Lack of active participation and of recognition made it difficult to begin any assistance effort. Other barriers were faced which included non-availability of qualified trained personnel, lack of commitment, lack of follow-up and ultimately lack of implementation.

2.3 ACSA's initial priority was the development of a legal infrastructure that would help civil aviation authorities establish their own safety oversight systems and comply with ICAO Standards. Once the laws and regulations of these countries were in compliance with SARPs, the next step was to harmonize them. It is in this area where ACSA has paid special consideration during the last few years. A set of common regulations was developed for Central America while having in mind the ultimate goal of achieving harmonization and mutual recognition among Central American countries.

3. BENEFITS THROUGH ECONOMIES OF SCALE

3.1 The benefits achieved by the Central American regional cooperation exercise are not limited to providing assistance to, and strengthening of, civil aviation authorities. In addition to the efficiency and effectiveness, let alone elimination of duplication, it should be mentioned that a major benefit has been building safety oversight capacity while achieving economies of scale. The availability of qualified personnel ready to be fielded to member countries has lifted the burden off civil aviation authorities whose limited resources made it difficult to recruit and retain qualified technical experts. Achieving economies of scale is explained in the graph below.



3.2 It should be noted that ACSA not only retains a roster of qualified experts but it also undertakes to ensure that these personnel are recurrently trained and maintained up-to-date with the latest technological developments in order to maintain competence. In addition to continuously training its highly specialized technical staff as well as training national inspectors, ACSA has been able to respond to a request for technical assistance by another Central American country not member of COCESNA.

3.3 Moreover, our experience has shown that the benefits of regional cooperation include competitive markets and better opportunities for market growth, better defined relationships between civil authorities, regulators and service providers, harmonization and standardization of regulations, as well as international recognition.

4. PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

4.1 Promoting a safety culture is an important area that will continue to be pursued in the Central American countries. It is noted that the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) is moving towards a comprehensive systems approach and together with the whole international community; we are looking at strengthening the safety management systems (SMS). Collaboration and willingness to participate in the process is necessary to promote a safety culture.

4.2 In view of the above changes in the audit approach, ACSA has taken actions in preparing itself to provide capacity building to its member States. ACSA has created departments staffed with experts in the newly audited disciplines. These departments are in charge of developing compliant regulations and guidance material, coordinating the expert meetings, developing the training programmes and assisting the Central American countries. Additionally, ACSA has included all the Annexes to the Convention in its evaluations to the States in order to acquire a real sense of the compliance and actual situation. With the results of the evaluations, ACSA may develop an action plans and determine the assistance and training required.

4.3 As mentioned previously, ACSA was initially involved in developing tools for assisting member States and making them available. In the process ACSA evolved. One of its major achievements in this process has been the development of the Central American Regulations (RAC) system which is in its final stages. Once approved, the RAC system may be recognized as the common regulatory framework for Central America.

4.4 Although large amounts of financial resources have been invested in training and equipping qualified inspectors both at the national and regional levels, more remains to be done. A database is maintained by ACSA which includes not only a set of regional regulations, but also a roster of trained inspectors that are ready to be fielded upon request. It is hoped however that the recommendations of these inspectors would be implemented by national authorities in order to achieve better compliance with safety oversight recommendations.

4.5 Today ACSA analyzes the possibility of becoming an autonomous authority. In order to ensure competitiveness in a rapidly growing aviation industry, it would seek full recognition as an autonomous auditing authority from its member States. As it looks to provide continued assistance to COCESNA Member States, ACSA stands poised to respond to requests for assistance by other countries in the region as well.

5. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND THE UNIFIED STRATEGY PROGRAMME

5.1 The 35th Session of the ICAO Assembly adopted Resolution A35-7 which called on Contracting States to enter into regional and sub-regional cooperation. It is recognized although there are various regional and international initiatives that would respond to the Unified Strategy to Resolve Safety-Related Deficiencies, in their opinion, the Central American experience in ACSA could be considered as a pioneer example for the world of successful regional cooperative methods.

5.2 ACSA's success in responding to international safety oversight requirements with a high level of compliance is recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the industry such as Airbus and Boeing and the donor community such as the European Union, Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Regional cooperation is a useful method to attain a common goal by countries sharing a common cultural, geographical or linguistic background. Although creating a regional safety oversight organization is the best possible means to achieve harmonized and standardized set of regulations, there remains a potential for defining alternative strategies to achieve effective safety oversight.

6.2 The ACSA experience attests to the benefit of having a roster of readily available, experienced and well-trained experts that can be fielded to countries upon request to assist in carrying out their safety oversight obligations and surveillance functions.

6.3 The Conference is invited to:

- a) note the success of the Central American regional cooperation initiative in assisting member States by pooling resources and achieving economies of scale;
- b) note that the Central American Region is about to publish a common system of harmonized regulations called the Central American Regulations (RACs); and
- c) recognize the benefits of creating a pool of qualified and recurrently trained experts that can be readily fielded to implement the best safety standards and help States, anywhere in the world, maximize their efforts in meeting their safety oversight obligations under the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

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