



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

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Theme 2: Improving aviation safety
Topic 2.2: Management of aviation safety

MANAGEMENT OF AVIATION SAFETY IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

(Presented by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations)

SUMMARY

This information paper describes the scope of flight operations conducted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the challenges associated with this type of operations, the measures taken by DPKO in order to maintain safe flight operations, as well as some visions for the way ahead.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is dedicated to assisting the member States and the Secretary General in their efforts to maintain international peace and security. The Department's mission is to plan, prepare, manage and direct UN peacekeeping operations, so that they can effectively fulfil their mandates under the overall authority of the Security Council and General Assembly, and under the command vested in the Secretary General.

1.2 There are currently eighteen peacekeeping missions around the world. DPKO conducts air operations in fifteen peacekeeping missions with civil registered aircraft under long-term commercial charter agreement and with State aircraft provided by the Troop Contributing Countries under Letter of Assist (LOA).

1.3 For the period January to December 2005, over 200 aircraft assigned to different missions have flown approximately 100 000 flight hours and transported more than 680 000 passengers. The fleet is expected to grow further as some of the peacekeeping missions are expanding their scope of operations.

1.4 At Headquarters, the Air Transport Section of the Logistic Support Division (LSD) is responsible for managing the DPKO air fleet and for the provision of policies and roadmaps for planning, organizing, training and equipping UN peacekeeping missions with aviation assets, personnel and aviation ground services. At the mission level, it provides procedures and guidance for implementing operations, and provides criteria for assessing and monitoring air operations through an established aviation quality assurance programme.

1.5 During 2005, three accidents occurred with aircraft chartered by DPKO. They resulted in one fatality on the ground and one helicopter was considered a total loss.

2. CHALLENGES

2.1 Peacekeeping air transport operations include a vast range of activities, from regular scheduled passenger air transportation to logistics supply/re-supply flights, aerial observation to emergency medical evacuation, VIP flights to use of helicopters in combat operations, show of force and border patrol. This unique type of operations requires an enormous structure and a group of highly qualified professionals at every level in the field and at Headquarters.

2.2 While very few exceptions do exist, in general the area of peacekeeping air operations is characterized by a lack of aeronautical infrastructure and radio navigation aids, predominance of basic air traffic control systems without radar surveillance, non-reliable radio communications, lack of weather information, destroyed, damaged or non-functioning airport facilities and lack of national search and rescue plans of the host government. Furthermore, the CAAs of the host government often lack qualified and trained personnel and the appropriate resources to effectively perform their duties. As a result, the national legislation is outdated; there is no system in place for updating the national AIP, etc.

2.3 Harmonization of standards and procedures is of vital importance considering the fact that the current peacekeeping fleet consist of civilian registered aircraft from eleven member States and State aircraft provided by the governments of eight contributing countries. Therefore, DPKO has established standards and operational procedures in order to operate in a safe manner and to ensure compliance with ICAO SARPs.

3. MANAGEMENT OF AVIATION SAFETY

3.1 In order to maintain an adequate level of safe air operations, DPKO has established a sound aviation safety structure at Headquarters and in the field.

3.2 Following the principle that aviation safety should be separated from day-to-day operations, the structure allows for expert advice to be provided directly to the senior accountable manager. In the DPKO Headquarters in New York, the Aviation Safety Unit is part of the Office of the Director Logistics Support Division, while in the peacekeeping missions the Aviation Safety Unit (or officer in smaller missions) is part of the office of the Director of Administration.

3.3 The guiding documents related to aviation safety activities are: the Aviation Safety Manual; the Master Aviation Safety Programme; missions' Standard Operating Procedures and the Aviation Standards for Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Operations developed in collaboration with the World Food Programme.

3.4 The United Nations Aviation Safety Policy forms part of the Aviation Safety Manual and clearly defines the goal of the organization, managers' accountability, as well as the aviation safety structure and content of the Master Aviation Safety Programme.

3.5 The Aviation Standards were developed in accordance with the provisions of ICAO SARPs and were introduced in 2003 with the goal of harmonizing air operations with different types of aircraft from different member States.

3.6 The DPKO Aviation Safety Programme consists of the following core elements:

- a) aviation safety reporting system;
- b) risk management (assessment – mitigation);
- c) mission accident prevention programme;
- d) safety surveys;
- e) investigation of aircraft accidents and incidents;
- f) training; and
- g) dissemination of aviation safety information.

3.7 The established reporting system ensures that timely, adequate and accurate information regarding observed hazards, incidents and accidents is received at different managerial levels throughout the organization. It has been observed that some differences exist in the reporting cultures amongst the crews of different member States. Therefore, we are committed to maintaining a proactive campaign in order to achieve 100 per cent reporting of aviation related occurrences and observed hazards.

3.8 A comprehensive Risk Assessment system was developed and implemented in 2004. A total of fifteen risk elements considered critical to air operations in the field are currently being evaluated. Information is analyzed and identification of the trend and recommendations for the implementation of risk mitigating procedures is submitted to the senior management on a quarterly basis.

3.9 Each peacekeeping mission has developed an accident prevention programme tailored to the mission mandate, type of operations, environment and available resources. The programme provides instructions and guidelines in the following areas:

- a) mission emergency response plan;
- b) mission Aviation Safety Council;
- c) mission reporting system;
- d) airfield, helipad and servicing surveys;
- e) aircraft operations and maintenance surveys; and
- f) flight safety briefings and training sessions.

3.10 The Aviation Safety Unit/DPKO conducts aviation safety assistance visits to each peacekeeping mission on a regular basis. Provisions in the Aviation Safety Manual require these visits to be conducted not less than once every six months to missions with a permanent fleet of ten or more aircraft and not less than once every twelve months for other missions. The findings and recommendations from the visits are subject to a follow-up process, with a compliance verification phase conducted during subsequent visits.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 As mentioned above, the mission aviation safety officers report to the Director of Administration. However, being in the mission area, they are continually involved in day-to-day operations. In order to remove safety officers from day-to-day operations and to be able to provide safety advice with a certain degree of independence, DPKO is in the process of introducing a regional concept, where several aviation safety offices, based in strategically located centres and staffed with trained and experienced professional personnel, will be established in order to provide sufficient coverage to ensure an effective aviation safety programme. The first regional aviation safety office project has already been developed and is currently being submitted to different committees for consideration and approval.

4.2 Although some procedures regarding documentation processing are currently in place, DPKO still lacks a comprehensive aviation safety document management system. It is our intention to have implemented and developed by the end of 2006 detailed guidelines relating to documents management and to have established criteria in regard to the scope of submitted information, relevant time frame, tracking system and follow-up mechanisms.

4.3 In line with new trends and concepts in the field of aviation safety worldwide, DPKO is currently in the process of developing and implementing a safety management system at Headquarters and in the field missions.

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