

ELEVENTH AIR NAVIGATION CONFERENCE

Montreal, 22 September to 3 October 2003

Agenda Item 4: Capacity-enhancement measures

4.1 Global measures :

NEED TO REVIEW NIGHT CURFEW TO ENHANCE AIRPORT CAPACITY

(Presented by India)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the view that the prevalent practices of night curfew at some airports leads to restrictive air traffic handling capacity situations. Such restrictions, with increasing traffic volumes, result in air traffic congestion and imbalances in the utilization of aviation infrastructure. There is a need for revisiting the necessity of continuing with night curfews, to enable unrestricted availability of the airports and enhancing the capacity to meet the traffic demand without additions to infrastructure and compromises with safety procedures.

Action by the conference is in paragraph 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Growth in air transport operations world-over continuously demands increase in airport infrastructure and capacity. Efforts made by States and ICAO have yielded only limited results. Increasing capacity of airports is becoming difficult due to the requirements of large investments and non-availability of space. On one hand shortage of capacity is being felt due to increasing air traffic demand, on the other, the available capacity is not being fully utilized as a result of curfew imposed on night operations. The air transport industry can ill-afford such skewed luxuries. The prevailing practice of night curfews in various airports in the world adversely impacts the air traffic handling capacity and airport infrastructure at other airports as well.

1.2 Faced with increased traffic volumes, the aerodrome operators/service providers may have to resort to various measures, like additions to the airport infrastructure and capacity-enhancing procedures to deal with the increasing traffic. Such actions may add to the complexity of an aerodrome physical layout leading to runway incursions and human errors.

1.3 There is a clear need to identify other easier options available to improve airport capacity to address the situation of increased traffic volumes. One such is to review the need to continue with the night curfew at aerodromes, thereby making the airport available all day around for operations. This would also result in optimum utilization of airport infrastructure at other airports which are impacted by the imposition of night curfews at some airports.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 A large number of airports, which have to handle the ever-growing air traffic demands, are constrained by their national regulations on environment resulting in imposition of night curfews. Such restrictions on air traffic flows impact adversely the air traffic handling capacities at several other airports also, as these airports have to bear the burden of air traffic mainly during certain hours to meet the requirements of curfews elsewhere.

2.2 The need to introduce night operation curfews was due to noise pollution caused by the aircraft engines when the aircraft engine noise levels were very high compared to the present day aircraft engine noise levels. The present day aircraft certified to the Chapter 3 requirements create much lower noise. Aircraft entering the fleet today is typically 20db quieter than aircraft of 30 years ago. This corresponds to 75 per cent reduction in noise annoyance. The future aircraft engines are expected to generate even lesser noise levels.

2.3 The existing practice of night curfew at airports in some regions of the world leads to traffic constraints and congestion twice-over; once at the non-curfew airports as most traffic is confined to certain hours to meet the curfew timings of other airports and again at the airports that operate with operational curfew times. While on the one hand the airport infrastructure and air navigation facilities face acute congestion during certain restricted hours at night at the airports of developing countries, on the other hand the same infrastructure goes abegging for the remaining period of the day. Expecting non-curfew airports to enhance their air traffic handling capacities to meet the congestion situation forming during certain hours only, is not justified and can be avoided if the existing restrictions on operations in the form of night curfews elsewhere are removed.

2.4 Such restrictions on air traffic operations create imbalances in handling capacities, skewed infrastructural requirements and operating procedures that may result in a compromise on safety and ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). The night curfew restrictions not only restrict growth of air transport operations, but also cause inconvenience to the traveling public. In the light of the technological advancements if these curfews on operations are removed, considerable additional airport capacity would become available and the air traffic would be able to operate without much restrictions. The airport operating capacities would increase considerably without the need to create complex infrastructure or operating procedures.

2.5 AN-Conf/11-WP/28 by ICAO Secretariat mentions the studies undertaken by NAV CANADA and their findings and also elucidates the measures taken by ICAO to prevent runway incursions.

While India fully endorses the measures taken by ICAO and other actions being progressed, it is also considered necessary that the need to continue the night curfew in various regions should be reviewed as an additional measure to enhance capacity to meet the demands of increased traffic volumes.

3. **ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE**

3.1 The conference is invited to:

- a) note the contents of the paper; and
- b) urge States that have imposed night curfews to review the requirements of such restrictions in view of the vast reduction in aircraft engine noise levels and make the airports available to air traffic operations without any time restrictions.

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