



Agenda Item 4: Specific Air Navigation Activities and Developments
4.4 Air Traffic Management (ATM)

IMPROPER USE OF 121,5 MHZ EMERGENCY FREQUENCY

(Presented by France)

SUMMARY

This working paper calls for actions in order to avoid the improper use of the emergency frequency by operators, improper use which risks hiding actual emergency situations.

1. Introduction

1.1 A new VHF Direction Finder has been implemented at both Fort de France and Pointe à Pitre Approach units.

1.2 Additionally to an excellent sensitivity, the equipment offers the capability to record and display the bearing of the last transmission. If it is coupled with the 121,5 MHz emergency frequency, it switches on a red light that warns the controller that an emergency transmission is received and incites him to check the content of the broadcast.

2. Discussion

2.1 After the installation, the trials have revealed a very high number of 121,5 MHz receptions : **between 5 to 20 conversations and more than 100 garbled signal receptions per day.**

2.2 The monitoring of the audible conversations shows that controllers as well as pilots (including regular airlines) very frequently make use of this frequency for various purposes other than emergency related.

2.3 Adding to the fact that this procedure does not respect the ICAO standards, the inappropriate use of this frequency presents various dangers as follows:

- hiding actual emergency transmissions, or
- erasing the recorded bearing, or
- causing interferences to the surveillance satellites and creating false alarms.

2.4 Furthermore, another consequence is that after a certain number of these useless receptions, the ATC in the French facilities do not trust the warning any more, and the benefit of it is lost.

2.5 The meeting is informed that warning letters referring to this situation were sent by France to IATA, TTCAA and ICAO.

3. Suggested action

3.1 The meeting is invited to take note of the information presented in this working paper.

3.2 In order to return to a normal situation, France proposes that appropriate reminding be given by each Civil Aviation Authority in order that,

- a) neither ATC nor operator under their respective jurisdiction use 121,5 MHz except in emergency related situations; and
- b) each occurrence of improper use of 121,5 MHz out of emergency related situation be reported by ATC to their quality of service officer for appropriate analysis and further reporting to the identified operator, IATA and ICAO.