



ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization
North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

WORKING PAPER

NACC/WG/10 — WP/16
19/08/25

Tenth North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group Meeting (NACC/WG/10)
Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico, from 8 to 12 September 2025

Agenda Item 4: Presentation of NACC/WG Task Forces

**UPDATE OF THE SEARCH AND RESCUE ACTIVITIES IN THE CAR REGION:
PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SEARCH AND RESCUE TASK FORCE**

(Presented by the Rapporteur of the Search and Rescue Task Force)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
This Working Paper presents an update on search and rescue activities carried out in the CAR Region since the task force's last report to the NACC/WG and requests support for the continued work of this task force.	
Action:	Suggested actions are included in Section 6
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Report of the Fifth North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group (NACC/WG) Search and Rescue (SAR) Implementation Task Force Meeting (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/5) Mexico City, Mexico, 23 to 27 September 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 Support for the implementation of search and rescue (SAR) services remains a high-priority activity for the Region, requiring coordination among various entities at the State level to integrate a harmonized strategy for safety oversight, information coordination to identify potential SAR events, and coordination of response resources.

1.2 The provision of SAR services is based on the premise of national and international collaboration to ensure an effective response to any event requiring their attention. The CAR Region has a complex network of responsibilities that makes adequate planning and coordination even more important.

1.3 Contracting States, individually or in cooperation with other States, must make the necessary arrangements to promptly establish and provide SAR services within their territories, or in airspaces for which they have assumed responsibility through regional agreements, to ensure assistance to persons in distress. Such services shall be provided 24 hours a day.

2. Background

2.1 During the fifth meeting of the NAM/CAR Air Navigation Implementation Task Force (ANI/WG/5), a SAR Implementation Task Force (SAR/TF) was formed to streamline SAR implementation activities and enhance regional cooperation to comply with ICAO Annex 12 – Search and Rescue Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), as well as regionally agreed objectives. The objective of this task force is to develop and implement a work program to ensure the continuous and consistent provision of SAR services in the NAM/CAR regions, in accordance with the CAR Region SAR Plan and agreed regional goals.

2.2 Since 2019, the SAR/TF has held annual meetings, typically accompanied by refresher workshops on the main SAR service concepts and expected enhancements to these services. The Fifth Meeting of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Task Force of the North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/5) was held at the ICAO NACC Regional Office, Mexico City, Mexico, from 25 to 27 September 2024.

2.3 The Meeting was preceded by a Workshop on Rescue Coordination Centres (RCC) and Rescue Subcentres (RSC) requirements, facilitated with the assistance of the United States Coast Guard (USCG), which provided guidance on the requirements for Rescue Coordination Centres (RCCs) and Subcentres (RSCs) to support the proper functioning of SAR coordination units in the CAR Region.

3. SAR activities since the NACC/WG/SAR/TF/5

3.1 *SAREX Organized by France*

3.1.1 The French DGAC, through the French Antilles and French Guiana Air Navigation Services (SNA-AG), organized the search and rescue exercise (SAREX) in May 2025. The objective of SAREX 2025 was to address challenges related to the complexity of the search and rescue (SAR) areas of responsibility within the PIARCO Flight Information Region (FIR), as well as to improve SAR response times. One of the main features of the exercise was the use of the Location of Aircraft in Distress (LADR) repository in real-time operations.

3.1.2 The simulation exercise involved a commercial airline with a damaged engine ditching off Saint Pierre, a city in Martinique. Two SAR teams participated in the exercise in Martinique: one from Trinidad and Tobago for the PIARCO FIR and one for the French FIRs. The exercise served to test the functionalities related to the location of an aircraft in distress (LADR) and experience its impact on real-time operations.

3.1.3 300-400 personnel participated during the two-day exercise. Day 1 was dedicated to coordination between stakeholders during the alert phases: coordination between the French land, air, and sea search and rescue (SAR) services, and with Trinidad and Tobago, with two controllers acting as air traffic controllers (ATCOs) on position and the head of the rescue coordination centre. On Day 2, the aircraft rescue was simulated with the participation of four helicopters, one of which coordinated the operation on scene.

3.2 SAREX Barranquilla

3.2.1 Supported by the ICAO South American Regional Office, the Colombian Civil Aviation Authority conducted a SAR exercise (SAREX) called ORIÓN 2025 in the city of Barranquilla. This SAREX consisted of a regional search and rescue simulation exercise that brought together representatives from Colombia, Curaçao, Jamaica and Panama. Over three days, coordination, communication, and decision-making procedures were evaluated in a simulated critical scenario. This exercise, without the need for physical deployment, was carried out with a high level of technical rigor.

3.2.2 The SAREX included the participation of representatives from the Rescue Coordination Centers of the Search and Rescue Regions (SRR) of Curaçao and Kingston (Jamaica), thus integrating the CAR Region into the exercise. The support of ICAO, which requested the exercise and provided the regulatory framework, best practices, and technical guidance, fostered the effectiveness and consistency of SAREX exercises internationally.

3.2.3 One of the most significant achievements was the signing of the updated Letter of Operational Agreement between Aerocivil of Colombia and the Central American Corporation of Air Navigation Services (COCESNA), which strengthens the regional commitment to SAR. Updating this agreement not only establishes joint procedures and facilitates the exchange of SAR resources, but also promotes exercises, training, and the harmonization of our protocols, aligned with ICAO standards and the IAMSAR Manual. The Colombian Civil Aeronautics extended its gratitude to the States and Organizations with roles as participants and observers, and reiterated its commitment to work and cooperate to ensure that life prevails in all scenarios.

3.3 France proposal to formalize the provision of SAR services within Piarco FIR

3.3.1 France presented a proposal during NACC/WG/SAR/TF/4 for a SAR technical agreement to formalize the delegation of SAR responsibilities between the Piarco Aeronautical RCC and the Martinique and Guadeloupe Aeronautical RSCs. Currently, there are no SAR agreements to formalize SAR responsibilities within the Piarco Search and Rescue Region (SRR).

3.3.2 This proposal was reiterated at the Thirteenth Meeting of Directors of Civil Aviation of North America, Central America and the Caribbean (NACC/DCA/13), held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 4 to 7 August 2025, along with a request for clarification on the status of the aeronautical and maritime rescue coordination centres (RCCs) and search and rescue regions (SRRs) declared to ICAO in the CAR/SAM Regional Air Navigation Plan and to the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

3.4 Increase in unauthorized/illegal flights

3.4.1 The CAR Region has seen an increase in unauthorized or illegal flights, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean.

3.4.2 It is important to highlight that these flights cause additional difficulties in the provision of air traffic services and sometimes lead to separation losses, as well as operational safety concerns.

4. Upcoming activities

4.1 *Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) Workshop*

4.1.1 The ICAO South American Regional Office has scheduled a Workshop on the Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS), to be held at the ICAO South American Regional Office in Lima, Peru, from October 13 to 15, 2025. This global system aims to improve the tracking, location, and response capabilities of commercial aircraft in distress anywhere in the world.

4.1.2 The workshop will cover the various requirements, roles, and responsibilities from the perspective of air traffic services, including search and rescue operations, as well as those related to commercial aircraft operations. The specific roles and responsibilities of air operators, aircraft manufacturers, and other stakeholders will also be addressed. Importantly, a live demonstration of the LADR/S (Location of Aircraft in Distress Repository), a key component of GADSS, has been included as part of the workshop agenda. This demonstration will be conducted by a EUROCONTROL specialist responsible for the platform design.

4.2 *Sixth Meeting of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Task Force*

4.2.1 The Sixth Meeting of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Task Force of the North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/6), will be held at the ICAO NACC Regional Office, Mexico City, Mexico, from October 28 to 30, 2025.

4.2.2 The Meeting will focus on following up on the signature of pending SAR agreements, promoting the development of SAR exercises, civil-military coordination, and promoting the implementation of the GADSS. Consequently, the task force's work program is expected to be updated to address the identified priorities of the Region.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conducting SAREXs is an effective mechanism for verifying the functioning of SAR functions, provided they reflect the operational reality of the RCCs and RSCs. Likewise, it is important to take measures to address identified opportunities for improvement.

5.2 The signing of SAR agreements remains a priority for the SAR Region. The NACC/WG must continue to reiterate the importance of SAR agreements to decision-makers.

5.3 The conduct of illicit and unauthorized flights remains a concern in our Region. It is necessary to strengthen civil-military coordination to improve information flows and mitigate the impact of these events on operational safety.

5.4 The implementation of the GADSS is an initiative that requires multidisciplinary action and the involvement of air traffic service providers as well as SAR providers.

6. Suggested actions

6.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) take note of the information presented in this Working Paper.
- b) reiterate the requests to finalize the signature of current SAR agreements, as well as request States to confirm the operation of the rescue coordination centres and subcentres under their responsibility.
- c) request the NACC/WG to promote the implementation of the GADSS and request air traffic control centres and rescue coordination centres in the CAR Region to update their data in the LADR.
- d) request any additional information deemed necessary.