



**Thirty First Regional Aviation Safety Group — Pan America Executive Steering Committee Meeting
(RASG-PA ESC/31)**

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 8 to 9 November 2018

Agenda Item 3: Safety management process within RASG-PA

b) Risk mitigation actions

Air traffic controller's language proficiency requirement

(Presented by Secretariat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
This working paper presents to consideration of the ESC an analysis of the compliance level of the language proficiency requirements in the South American States, and a proposal of a cooperation process between ICAO and IFATCA to improve the level of English proficiency in air traffic controllers.	
Action:	ESC to support the initiative of IFATCA - ICAO SAM for the improvements of language proficiency in air traffic controllers.
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ICAO Annex 1• Doc. 9835

1. Introduction

1.1 Until March 2003, the provisions regarding the use of English in aeronautical communication arose from two recommended practices included in Annex 10 and a standard contained in Annex 1. In Annex 10 it was recommended that communications should be made in English whenever the aircraft was unable to communicate in the language used on the ground station.

1.2 In 2004, ICAO published Doc. 9835 / Annex 453, which clearly establishes the obligation on the correct use of standard phraseology in aeronautical communications. It also establishes that in cases where this was not possible, the use of plain English should be used, for which pilots and air traffic controllers should demonstrate a minimum level of language proficiency in English.

1.3 Resolution A36-11 urges the Council to guide the States in the process of preparing and implementing action plans to comply with these requirements. Currently, the minimum level required for granting the license is level 4 or higher. To reach that level, a controller or pilot must obtain at least level 4 in each of the proficiency areas evaluated according to the ICAO qualification scale. The level of proficiency of each evaluated is the lowest level obtained from the linguistic descriptors.

1.4 ICAO Annex 1 Amendment 164 approved on March 5, 2003, establishes the application of language proficiency requirements for pilots and air traffic controller applicants and license holders from March 5, 2008, according to the scale established by ICAO in the documents mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

2. Compliance of the South American Region regarding the Language Proficiency Requirements in Air Traffic Controllers

2.1 The language proficiency requirements are intended to reduce the risk level related to aeronautical communications, especially those that deviate from the ICAO standardized aeronautical phraseology that should be used at all times as the primary method to carry out the communications between the pilots and the controllers.

2.2 Level 4 is the minimum proficiency level that an air traffic controller or pilot should have to perform in an environment where communications are carried out in the language of the station and English. In airspace where communications are carried out in Spanish or Portuguese, but also in English, the minimum proficiency level of any ATCO or pilot should be level 4.

2.3 In the first half of this year the ICAO SAM in coordination with the SRVSOP carried out a "benchmarking" of the language proficiency level of the air traffic controllers of the SAM, the results show that although there are some States that the level of air traffic controllers complies with the ICAO requirements, there are still States that need to establish a strategy to improve compliance with this requirement (see Table I at the end of this WP).

2.4 It is important to mention that Authorities must ensure that the risk level related to aeronautical communications is within an acceptable level, implementing the necessary mitigation and correction actions to comply with the requirements.

2.5 During 2018 the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) implemented a cooperative work with the associations of air traffic controllers of the SAM region to train English trainers to carry out systemic processes to improve the language proficiency in air traffic controllers.

2.6 Recognizing the enhancement to aviation safety by complying with the ICAO requirements in regards to English language competencies and the associated aviation safety risks of non-complying, RASG-PA might be interested on supporting an IFATCA-RASG-PA initiative.

2.7 For this process, IFATCA would provide the instructors and the training program, ICAO Regional Offices would coordinate with the States, and the States would cover the costs.

2.8 Among the advantages of the IFATCA-RASG-PA initiative, we can point out that it is an efficient program in terms of investment, since the State only would cover the travel costs of the

instructor, the trained instructors are active controllers who can develop Language improvement programs with the rest of the ATC staff, and the States could train the number of instructors that they consider necessary.

2.9 It is important to mention that the States that do not establish the adequate measures of certification and monitoring of the language proficiency requirements in compliance with ICAO Standards could if the risk justifies, qualify for a Significant Safety Concern (SSC).

2.10 During the PA-RAST/33, the secretariat presented for analysis of the meeting a WP with the proposal to establish in the CAR/SAM States a training program for English trainers developed by IFATCA in coordination with the States, with the objective of improving the level of compliance in the requirements related to language proficiency. The PA-RAST/33 attendees showed their interest and support for the proposal, and requested the secretariat to present to the ESC the WP for approval.

3 Actions

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Take note of the information provided in this working paper;
- b) to request RASGPA ESC to support the initiative of IFATCA – RASG-PA for the establishment of the train the trainer processes for language proficiency in air traffic controllers and requesting ICAO NACC and SAM Regional Offices to coordinate with their accredited States for the development of the training workshop for trainer of language proficiency in air traffic controllers.

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Table I

State	Total number of ATCOs	% of ATCOs Level 4	% of ATCOs Level 5%	% of ATCOs Level 6	Total percentage of ATCOs that comply with ICAO requirement
Argentina *	-	-	-	-	-
Bolivia	217	16%	5%	9%	30%
Brasil - DECEA	3426	29%	11%	3%	43%
Chile	392	93%	---	---	93%
Colombia	614	63.2%	2.8%	0	66%
Cuba	180	77%	17%		94%
Ecuador	237	58%	6%	1,50%	65%
Panamá	175	34%	21%	26%	81%
Paraguay	36	67%	33%	0%	100%
Perú	235	72%	18%	7%	97%
Uruguay	94	37%	50%	13%	100%
Venezuela	344	14.2	7	2.6	23.8

* No information available