



International Civil Aviation Organization

**The First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group Meeting
(AHACG/1)**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 11-12 September 2014

Agenda Item 3: Europe- Southeast/South Asia Contingency Planning (scenarios, procedures)

IFATCA PERSPECTIVE

(Presented by IFATCA)

SUMMARY

This paper presents information on the current situation being experienced by one ANSP following the rerouting of a large number of flights to avoid overflying Ukraine airspace. It also highlights IFATCA's concerns for the proposed rerouting of flights in the event of the closure of Afghan airspace.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The whole world was rightly shocked by the tragic event involving flight MH17 that occurred in the skies over the Ukraine on 17 July 2014. This incident and others before demonstrate that commercial flights are not immune from military actions when they operate over areas of conflict. Similarly, military action on the ground can seriously impact the provision of civilian air traffic services in affected areas, necessitating the provision of a reduced ATC service or even the withdrawal of all services and the closure of airspace.

2. DISCUSSION

Recent Events

2.1 Regrettably in today's world hostile situations are now counted as yet another flight risk to be considered by airlines when planning routes in certain areas of the world. When considering their route options, operators will obviously maintain safety as their first priority whilst commercial matters will also be taken into account.

2.2 However any rerouting by airlines will only relate to the avoidance of areas of known military threats, it will not take into account the significant impact that any rerouting could have on the adjacent airspace with regard to traffic intensity and route complexity.

2.3 Prior to the events of 17 July 2014, an IFATCA member association reported that their FIR handled approximately 400 overflights a day. Immediately after the that day, a number of flights started to reroute through their FIR to avoid Ukraine airspace; now over a month later, it is handling over 900 overflights each day.

2.4 A rapid increase in traffic such as this would be difficult for an ATC unit with modern automated facilities, integrated systems and PBN structured airspace to efficiently manage. Therefore for a unit which may have ageing equipment, limited facilities, a ground-based navigation route network and poor communication with neighbouring units, an increase of this magnitude of traffic will seriously overload the capabilities of the system and the controllers.

Future Events

2.5 In being proactive and preparing contingency plans for the possibility of Afghan airspace becoming yet another problem area on the airlines flight planning charts, the implications of the migration of a large number of flights to alternative routes or into a single FIR must be considered.

2.6 The airspace in some parts of this region is already congested and in addition the military authorities prohibit civil aircraft operations in large areas. Therefore the addition of extra flights could have serious repercussions on the efficiency and ultimate safety of operation of ATC units in the area.

2.7 IFATCA is of the opinion that any proposed major increase in traffic on a specific route or in a single FIR requires a comprehensive safety case based on Annex 19 Safety Management System principles to be conducted before implementation. Whilst the aviation industry seeks a short term solution to this problem, it must not be at the expense of actions that may compromise safety.

2.8 Unconsciously airlines may be creating a latent risk to the safe operation of aircraft whilst avoiding a known threat.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper; and
- b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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