International civil aviation organization

COM CO-ORDINATION MEETING
(Afghanistan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan)

16 – 17 December 2014, New Delhi, India

Agenda Item 1: **Review Outcome of Relevant Meetings**

**REVIEW OUTCOME OF APANPIRG, AD HOC AFGHANISTAN
CONTINGENCY GROUP (AHACG)**

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper reviews outcome of APANPIRG/25 held in September 2014 regarding COM deficiencies and the flight plan issue raised by Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group meeting held in November 2014.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Twenty Fifth meeting of Asia/Pacific Air Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group (APANPIRG/25) was held in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia in 8-11 September 2014. Under agenda item 4, the meeting reviewed the list of air navigation deficiencies including the COM deficiencies on the unreliability of AFS communication between Afghanistan and Pakistan which was brought to the notice of APANPIRG/21 in September 2010. The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation Afghanistan and CAA. Pakistan were requested to the take remedial action by the end of 2014 including the following:

- to utilize the VPN circuit operational since January 2012 for exchange of AFTN traffic, organize users' training;

- to harmonize VSAT terminal equipment and select common network service provider to recover the VSAT Links; and

- looking possibility to establish 2 MB dedicated landline connection with multiplexers between Afghanistan and Pakistan to support both data and voice communication between COM centres and ACCs.

1.2 The Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group (AHACG/2) was held at Istanbul, Turkey from 17 to 19 November 2014 and its first meeting was held from 11 to 12 September 2014 immediately after APANPIRG/25 meeting. At the AHACG/2 meeting, Flight plan and communications issues between Iran and Afghanistan was discussed. The report of the issue was provided in the WP/03 to that meeting which is provided in the attachment to this paper

1.3   The High-level Meeting on Afghanistan Airspace Contingency Planning was held in Hong Kong SAR, China on 28 November 2014. The HLAAC meeting reviewed the vital steps ahead for Afghanistan airspace operation that could act as milestones:

-   17 December 2014 – start of the 'bridging contract (extension of the current Air Navigation Service Provider);

-   01 January 2015 – Afghanistan CAA budget approval (USD 25 million, note: the Airspace Control Authority may not pass to the Afghanistan government at this time);

-   28 February 2015 – Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) contract (renewal or new provider – IATA agreed to discuss the situation with VSAT vendors and Afghanistan, and report back to ICAO);

-   01 April 2015 – Deadline date for the new Air Navigation Service (ANS) contract to be signed; and

-   30 June 2015 – earliest end date for the ANS extension (dependent on service cost).

2.   DISCUSSION

2.1   At the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group (AHACG/2), WP/03 was presented by the Secretariat based on a report received from CAA. Islamic Republic of Iran on flight plan distribution problems experienced with Afghanistan.   The main issues and outcome of discussions by the meeting are follows:

2.2   A Mission by the ICAO APAC Regional Office to Kabul, Afghanistan in June 2014 also noted a number of problems concerning the flight plan distribution and aeronautical communications, including:

-   the briefing office was using ageing tools;

-   the AFTN line performed poorly in the considered period; and

-   flight plan submission and distribution processed mixed exchanges of emails/ Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunication Network (AFTN) messages, paper copies, with a number of duplicated inputs by operators.

2.3   It was noted that a CADAS system – a solution providing messaging services for aeronautical offices, airlines and pilots – was installed but not operationally used. The system apparently complied with the ICAO Aeronautical Message Handling System (AMHS) standards and could probably contribute quickly to the improvement of flight plan submission and distribution processes. It was noted by Afghanistan that a means of effectively handling flight plans was necessary to support current ATS and any contingency situation.

2.4   Iran reported to the ICAO MID Regional Office that a Very Small Aperture (VSAT) connection between Kabul and Tehran was previously operational but was not functioning on the Afghanistan side. Within Afghanistan, internal communications were provided by two different VSAT networks: one for voice and data communications and another one for surveillance. While the VSAT network supporting the Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast Wide Area Multilateration (ADS/B WAM) had been shut down, most of the VSAT network supporting the Very High Frequency (VHF) radio coverage was operating except at Chaghcharan, Ghazni and Salerno.

2.5   The meeting noted that to have reliable voice communications, the VSAT network supporting the VHF coverage had to be secured and an HF solution could be provided as a backup. Afghanistan agreed that the installation of HF or some other communication means in the Kabul Area Control Centre (ACC) was an urgent priority to provide redundancy for both air to ground and also for ground to ground communication between ATS units.

                            Status of Military Transition in Afghanistan

2.6   Afghanistan/ISAF provided a joint presentation on the status of the transition from military to civil control. They noted that Kandahar, Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat aerodromes would be managed by the framework/lead nations.

2.7   The presentation noted that the ACAA was meeting with the President of Afghanistan soon, and he would decide on contract and training options. ISAF had assessed USD 200 million as a fair price over a five year period for the ANSP contract (which included the provision of ATS). The Afghanistan Ministry of Finance had approved USD 25 million as the ACAA budget for 2015.

3.   ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1   The meeting is invited to note the information provided in this paper and discuss the remedial action regarding the flight plan and communication issues as highlighted in the attached WP/03.

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International Civil Aviation Organization

The Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group Meeting (AHACG/2)

Istanbul, Turkey, 17-19 November 2014

Agenda Item 2: Afghanistan ATS Status and Capability Building

Flight plan and communications issues in Afghanistan

(Presented by Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the status on flight plan and communication major issues in Afghanistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO MID Regional Office has recently in October 2014 received a letter from CAA, Islamic Republic of Iran reporting flight plan distribution problems experienced with Afghanistan.

1.2 A mission by the ICAO APAC Regional Office went to Kabul, Afghanistan in June 2014 and noted also a number of problems concerning the flight plan distribution and aeronautical communications.

2. DISCUSSION

Flight plan issues

2.1 Concerning the flight plan problems occurring between Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan, ICAO Offices involved (MID and APAC Regions) are seeking more clarity on the source of the problems. However no specific findings have been raised yet.

2.2 The mission by ICAO APAC Regional Office in June 2014 noted that the briefing office was using ageing tools, that the AFTN line performed poorly in the considered period, and that the flight plan submission and distribution processes mixed exchanges of emails/ AFTN messages, paper copies, with a number of duplicated inputs by operators.

2.3 It was noted that a CADAS system from Comsoft, a solution providing messaging services for aeronautical offices, airlines and pilots, was installed but not operationally used. It apparently complied with the ICAO standards (AMHS) and could probably contribute quickly to the improvement of flight plan submission and distribution processes.

2.4 The current flight plan issues may also affect the implementation of the contingency plan being worked by AHACG.

International communication issues

2.5   Brought to the notice of APANPIRG in 2011 and recorded as a deficiency against the ICAO APAC air navigation plan, communication issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan remain a problem. There is a lack of reliability in the aeronautical fixed services including data communication between Kabul and Karachi and ATS voice communication between Lahore and Kabul. The COM coordination meeting in June 2012 developed a remedial action plan with three action items:

> 1. Near-term by end of September 2012, fully utilize the VPN circuit operational since January 2012 for exchange of AFTN traffic, organize users' training if required;

> 2. Mid-term by end of March 2013, harmonize VSAT terminal equipment and select common network service provider to recover the VSAT Links;

> 3. Long-term by end of June 2014, establish a 2 MB dedicated landline connection with multiplexers between Afghanistan and Pakistan to support both data and voice communication between COM centres and ACCs.

2.6   Action items 2 and 3 have not progressed and another COM coordination meeting has been set up for December 2014 in India.

2.7   Iran reported to ICAO MID Regional Office that a VSAT connection between Kabul and Tehran was previously operational but was stopped from Afghan side. The ICAO MID regional requirement is to have direct speech circuit and AFTN connection with Tehran.

Internal communication issues

2.8   Inside the Afghan country, the ICAO team noted communication problems at the time of the mission in June 2014. Internal communications were provided by two different VSAT networks: one for voice and data communications and another one for surveillance. While the VSAT network supporting the ADS/B WAM was totally shutdown, most of the VSAT network supporting the VHF Radio coverage was operating at the time of the mission except in Chaghcharan and Salerno.

2.9   The situation may have evolved meanwhile.

Possible solutions to flight plan issues

2.10   Concerning the flight plan issues, the causes have to be precisely identified. The solution to put in place could be a simple re-engineering of the flight plan submission and distribution workflow, and the implementation of CADAS system and associated training of operators. A workaround may be found out through airlines directly. The case of distribution of flight plans to CAA, Islamic Republic of Iran may be opportunely addressed in this process, as well as the flight plan distribution needs for the contingency plan.

Possible solutions to communication issues

2.11   With regard to the international communication issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the COM coordination meeting may have to involve a communication service provider to help solve the issues. The long term solution could be brought by the CRV aeronautical network envisaged in the APAC region for end 2016 and would require that both Afghanistan and Pakistan join the CRV initiative.

2.12   International communications between Kabul and Tehran could use a fiber-based solution as Iran prefers this method of connection. However Iran is also ready for VSAT that can support both AFTN and Direct speech.

2.13   Once the AFTN connectivity is resolved, this would enhance the flight plan distribution to Iran provided the reengineering described in this paper is properly implemented.

2.14   To have reliable voice communications, the VSAT network supporting the VHF coverage has to be secured. A HF solution could be provided if the VHF serviceability cannot be secured. The reception and transmission of HF signals across the Afghan airspace would need to be properly tested.

2.15   There would be a need to have a responsive point of contact in ACAA for flight plan and communication issues.

3.   ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1   The meeting is invited to:

a) note the issues raised in this paper;

b) consider the possible solutions proposed in paragraphs 2.10 to 2.15; and

c) plan the necessary actions as part of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency plan or Special COM coordination meetings.

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