



*International Civil Aviation Organization*

**CALL SIGN CONFUSION AD-HOC WORKING GROUP**

**First Meeting (CSC WG/1)**  
*(Abu Dhabi, UAE, 16 – 18 February 2015)*

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**Agenda Item 3: Mitigation Measures for Call Sign Confusions and Similarities**

EXPERIENCE AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY  
SHEIHK ZAYED AIR NAVIGATION CENTER (SZC)

*(Presented by United Arab Emirates)*

**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this paper is to present the operational experience gained and the effort made by UAE ACC and the actions taken to minimise the safety related risks associated with Callsign Confusion within the UAE FIR.

Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Information contained in ICAO DOC 9956 (Global and Regional 20-year forecasts) and work carried out by the UAE National Airspace Advisory Committee (NASAC) Working Group 3 suggests that an annual increase in traffic of up to 7.4% is expected within the UAE Flight Information Region (FIR) and the Middle East over the next 20 years.

1.2 The total number of flights within the UAE FIR will increase from 644,457 flights in the year 2010 to an estimated 1,856,909 flights by the year 2030.

1.3 Callsign confusion poses a major safety related issue today within the Middle East Regional Network and with the projected traffic growth for our major airline operators, this issue, unless a workable solution can be found, will also multiply.

1.4 Callsign confusion is not solely a national issue, but a system wide global problem. Similar callsigns have been adopted over the years for many reasons such as flights to Asia containing the number '8', as this is seen as a lucky number or similar callsigns being used for routings to certain destinations for simplicity within flight planning & scheduling. For the UAE a lot of the commonality has emanated from the rise of the UAE carriers such as Emirates and Etihad. The expansion of these airlines contained the adoption of similar flight planning principles used for callsign selection with certain destinations or routes.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The role of minimizing safety implications related to callsign confusion does not just rest with one ANSP or with one airline. System wide collaboration is required from all stakeholders to firstly understand the issues and then work in harmony to formulate the agreed solutions.

2.2 Within the current operations callsign confusion is generating the following:

2.2.1 Safety related incidents reported with causal factors associated to similar callsigns.

2.2.2 Regular occurrences of callsign confusion where there was no loss of prescribed ATC separation but there was some deviation, *or*, there was no deviation from operating procedures.

2.2.3 Common routes and growth patterns across our major airlines generating similar departure/arrival times, coupled with similar callsign allocation methodology being adopted.

2.3 The UAE recognises the safety implications associated with callsign confusion and has worked on various activities to address some of these issues:

2.3.1 Callsign Confusion Campaign – *In 2013 SZC undertook a campaign to highlight to operational staff the issue of callsign confusion. During the period of the campaign SMS's were sent to operational staff over a period of 20 days.*

2.3.2 Incorporation of similar callsigns within the SZC Emergency & Competency Training (ECT) - *During the 2013 & 2014 ECT similar callsigns were incorporated within the simulation exercises to raise awareness of the issues related to similar callsigns. Statistics were captured and distributed to the ATCO's by SMS:*

### **Similar Callsigns:**

- I. 146 Cases of Similar callsigns
- II. 94 advised – 64%
- III. 52 not advised – 36%

2.3.3 Local Air Traffic Service Instructions (LATSI) References – Incorporation of procedures associated with callsign confusion:

*Point 2.9.4 - 'When a sector is manned by an Executive Controller and a Planner, the responsibilities of the Planner are as follows: (i) Point out similar callsigns to the Executive Controller'.*

*Point 2.22.4 - 'To avoid confusion, when similar callsigns are on frequency at the same time, one of the following phrases shall be uses: - "[1<sup>st</sup> callsign] be advised [2<sup>nd</sup> callsign] also on frequency" or "[callsign] [callsign] [instruction]"*

2.3.4 ICAO ATM SG/1 Working Paper on callsign confusion submitted by the UAE.

2.3.5 ATC System Upgrade to allow the incorporation of a Radio Telephony Callsign to be added when similar callsigns exist.

2.3.6 Active member of the UAE National Airspace Advisory Committee (NASAC) Working Group 3 – Callsign confusion.

2.3.7 Callsign Confusion Survey and data collection.

2.3.8 Safety Newsletter.

2.4 With the rapid growth expected over the next 20 years, it is vital that callsign confusion related incidents and events do not increase by the same ratio. As the frequency congestion and 'clipping' of transmissions become more common, solutions must be future proofed to cater for the predicted growth across the region.

### **3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) support the work presented and delivered by SZC as well as to also reflect on the commendable work previously presented through ICAO MIDANPIRG;
- b) discuss when do we expect the next ICAO New Flight Plan Format (INFPL) change and can this Working Group influence this decision?;
- c) discuss if a solution to the callsign similarity issue can wait for the next Global aviation change and is it possible for this group to pave the way for the World?; and
- d) define the best communication methodology with other stakeholders who may contribute in finding a tangible solution to Callsign similarity.

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