International Civil Aviation Organization

MIDANPIRG/20 and RASG-MID/10 Meetings

(Muscat, Oman, 14-17 May 2023)

Agenda Item 5.6: ATM-SAR

CALL SIGN CONFUSION

(Presented by IATA)

SUMMARY

This paper aims to address regional Call Sign Confusion/Similarity, which poses a threat to flight safety, particularly for commercial flights. The paper suggests that the application of Alphanumeric Call Signs can eliminate or reduce call sign confusion. Action by the meeting at paragraph 3.

REFERENCES

- RASG-MID SAFETY ADVISORY – 04
- ICAO State Letter Ref.: AN 6/34-16/173
- MIDANPIRG/15 Report
- MIDANPIRG Steering Group/ 4
- MIDANPIRG/16 Report
- MIDANPIRG/17 Report
- ATM SG 5

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1　　　　The use of similar call signs by aircraft operating in the same area and on the same radio frequency has the potential to cause flight safety incidents, with potential for hearback/readback errors leading to loss of separation, a level bust, an AIRPROX, or a mid-air collision, as well as general confusion and increased workload for both pilots and controllers.

1.2　　　　The risk of an aircraft taking and acting on a clearance intended for another aircraft due to call sign confusion is a common occurrence. Studies have indicated to eliminate or reduce callsign confusion is through the application of Alphanumeric Call Signs.

1.3　　　　Airlines continue to experience challenges when filing Flight Plans with Alpha Numerics in State(s) where they were previously approved. With an individual State or airport denial, the airline will be unable to use the callsign for the entirety of the flight.

1.4　　　　IATA Member Airlines of the Regional Safety & Flight Operations Coordination Group (RCG) have highlighted the lack of approvals to use deconflicted callsigns (Alpha Numerics) to be a regional safety priority.

2.   DISCUSSION

2.1   Call Sign Similarity and confusion were identified as a safety issue in the MID Region by the Second Meeting of the Middle East Regional Aviation Safety Group (RASG-MID/2), November 2012.

2.2   The MIDANPIRG Steering Group/4 meeting recognized that many mitigation measures could be investigated to eliminate the risks associated with the call sign confusion, and agreed to Conclusion 4/22 which invited States that had not yet done so to take necessary measures to comply with ICAO Annex 10 and Doc 4444 provisions related to the acceptance of the alphanumeric call signs.

2.3   MIDANPIRG 15, Conclusion 15/2: Call Sign Similarity Provisions And Guidelines, urged States to report call sign similarity/confusion cases and develop a simplified mechanism to trigger the reporting of call sign similarity/confusion by ATCOs.

2.4   ICAO issued State Letter Ref.: AN 6/34-16/173 dated 26 June 2016, requesting States to implement MIDANPIRG Conclusion 15/2 and report call sign similarity/confusion cases to ICAO and IATA.

2.5   MIDANPIRG 17/RASG 7 meeting, urged States to take necessary actions to ensure that their relevant authorities, including the airport operators, accept ANCS and to follow up with their air operators to implement the procedures for the de-conflicting of call sign similarities in coordination with the CSC Initiative Team.

3.   ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1   The meeting is invited to:

a) undertake a regional survey to ascertain the status of capability to accept/process alphanumeric call signs for scheduled airline operations;

b) consider creation of a dedicated Task Force Chaired by ICAO / IATA to progress Alphanumeric Callsign initiatives, including deployment of a series of carefully coordinated trials through to full implementation per State across the entire region;

c) establish and maintain a comprehensive database of airports/ ANSPs that are able/unable to handle flights with alphanumeric callsigns, and progress towards implementation of capability; and

d) Encourage reporting of Call Sign Similarity to the following email addresses: MIDCSC@icao.int and IATA_AME@IATA.ORG with the subject header: Callsign Conflict | Flights ID | xxxxFIR.

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